

Proceedings of the International Congress of Siraf Port

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Bushehr - I. R. Iran



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Contents:

Introduction	1
David B. Whitehouse	
History of Archaeological Surveys in Sīrāf Port	8
Fred Aldsworth BA FSA MIFA IHBC	
The port of Siraf: Historical Memory and Iran's role in the Persian Gulf	28
Lawrence Potter	
The material culture of Siraf – 8th to 11th centuries	50
Sarah Jennings	
Siraf and East Africa	71
Mark Horton	
Archaeological Surveys in the Highlands behind Siraf ...	94
Donald Whitcomb	
Stucco reliefs of Scenes from the Shahnama in a fort at Bandar-e Taheri (Siraf)	109
Jennifer Scarce	
..... از سیراف به کیش : تجارت اقیانوس هند و کیش در عصر مغول یوکائیچی یاسوهیرو	125
The Rise of Siraf: Long-Term Development of Trade Emporia within the Persian Gulf.	137
Seth, M.N. Priestman	

Revisiting Siraf as a Persian Gulf Commercial Port in the late Sassanian and Early Islamic Period: What Archaeology and Contemporaneous Manuscripts Reveal	157
Dr. Eric Hooglund	
Dutch Presence in the Persian Gulf (1623-1766)	164
Dr. Willem Floor	
The Persian Gulf and Siraf in works by Muslim Cartographers	196
Dr. Gholamreza Vatandoust	
An Archaeological Overview (Abstract)	215
David B. Whitehouse	
Domestic Architecture (Abstract).....	216
David B. Whitehouse	

Introduction

David B. Whitehouse
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The site of Siraf, modern Taheri, lies on the Iranian coast of the Persian Gulf, 220 Km. south-east of Bushehr and approximately 380 Km. west-north-west of Bandar Abbas. The existence of a ruined site at Taheri was reported by James Morier in 1812 and the site was visited subsequently by Captain Brucks, I.N the first surveyor of the Persian Gulf, who thought that it was Portuguese. It was later visited by three other officers of the Indian Navy: Captain G. B. Kempt Horne, who examined the site in 1835 and was the first person to identify the ruins with Siraf, Commodore Ethersey and Captain Arthur Stiffe. Kempt Horne and Stiffe were the first writers to publish eye-witness accounts of the site and Kempt Horne removed a stone grave cover which he presented to the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. In the 1860 Taheri was visited by a ship involved in laying one of the submarine cables between Bushehr and Jask, 225 Km. south-east of Bandar Abbas. On this occasion a second grave cover was removed and presented to the British Museum. The site has been visited on several occasions in the twentieth century: notably by members of the French expedition to Sabzabad, a prehistoric site near Bushehr, by Sir Arnold



Wilson in 1911, Sir Aurel Stein in 1933, Karl Lindberg in 1940 and Prof. L. Vanden Berghe in 1960-61. All these visitors produced accounts of Taheri and Steins description contains the fullest discussion of the site hitherto published. In 1962 Dr. Alastair Lamb visited Taheri and reported on its archaeological potential.

The earliest reference to Siraf occurs in the writings of Ibn al-Faqih (active c.850 A.D.), who noted that Sirafi ships traded with India. About the same time Sulaiman the Merchant recorded that Middle Eastern goods bound for China were sent first from Basra to Siraf, whence they were dispatched by way of Muscat and Quilon, an important entrepot on the Malabar Coast. Fifty years later Abu Zaid (877-915/6) himself a merchant of Siraf, noted that Sirafi Merchants visited Jidda in the Red Sea and the Zanzibar coast. Abu Zaid also stated that, although Chinese coins were still in circulation at Siraf, the volume of trade between the Persian Gulf and China had decreased after the massacre of foreign merchants in Canton in 878. When Masudi (d.956) visited Madagascar between 916 and 926 he found ships from Siraf and Oman and he also noted the presence of Sirafi vessels at the head of the Persian Gulf in the ports of al-Ubulla and Abbadan.

The next geographer to mention Siraf, Istakhri (writing shortly before 950), provides the fullest surviving account of the city. In the district of Ardashir (south-west Fars), he wrote, Siraf was second in importance only to Shiraz and was almost as large as the latter. Despite its position in the hottest part of the coast and the scarcity of drinking water, fruit and vegetables, all of which were fetched from the plain of Jamm, Siraf was a prosperous city with imposing buildings. The multi-story houses were built with wood imported from East Africa and a merchant might spend as much as 30000 dinars on building a house. Ibn Hauqal, another tenth-century writer who derived much of his account from Istakhri, added that the city possessed three places of worship. According to Istakhri, the merchandise which passed through Siraf included aloes, ambergris, camphor, gemstones, bamboo, ivory, ebony, paper, sandalwood and other perfumes, drugs and spices. The city was an important market for pearls and among its own products were linen napkins and veils. Writing of the period 908-932, the twelfth century writer Ibn al-Balkhi recorded that the value of goods handled at Siraf amounted to no less than 2,530,000 dinars per annum.

However, by the time Muqaddasi wrote a description of Siraf in the late tenth century a decline had begun. The city was still an important entrepot with remarkable houses, but a sever



earthquake which lasted for seven days had damaged the city in 977 and many of the merchants had moved elsewhere. After the fall of the Buyid Dynasty (c. 1055) and the consequent disruption of trade routes in Fars, much of the foreign traffic was diverted from Siraf to Qais, an offshore island some 110 km. farther north. Thus, when Ibn al-Balkhi wrote the *Fars Nama* in the twelfth century, Siraf had greatly declined. When Yaqut (writing in 1218) visited the site the city was in ruins and supported only a few impoverished inhabitants. The only large building still intact was a mosque with wooden columns. The place-name Siraf had become corrupted to Shilau, a name still attached to part of the site.

We may summarize the documentary evidence for the history of siraf as follows. By the time Siraf was mentioned first (c. 850), it was already a flourishing port with merchants dealing with India and south-east Asia. During the next hundred years the city continued to prosper and Sirafi merchants traded with the Red Sea, East Africa and Madagascar in the West and with India, the Malay Peninsula and china in the east. In the early tenth century, more than 2.5 million dinars worth of woods passed through Siraf annually. In 977 the city was damaged by an earthquake and thereafter declined. After the fall of the Buyids (c. 1055) most of the trade was diverted to Qais and by 1218 Siraf was in ruins.

The site of Siraf Extends along the edge of a shallow bay, the ends of which are low sandy spits. The bay, which faces south, is 4 km. across. Immediately inland is a rugged sandstone ridge. In this part of Fars, the hinterland consists of a series of long mountainous ridges roughly parallel to the coast. These ridges, which are precipitous and reach heights of more than 1500 m. within 20 km. of the sea, are broken only occasionally by passes, making communication between the coast and the interior extremely difficult. At Siraf itself the first low ridge begins less than 500 m. from the beach, leaving only a narrow habitable strip. The bay is divided into two unequal parts by a spur which runs from the first ridge to the sea. To the east lies the village of Taheri and on the spur itself is the Shaik's fortified mansion. To the west of the spur is the site of Siraf, which extends along the shore for more than 2 km. The coastal strip widens towards the west end of the bay until, on the west side of a dry wadi known as Kunarak, the plain of Bagh-i-Shaikh is about 1 km. across.

In the western part of the bay the first ridge is broken at two points:

By the winding valley of Kunarak, through which the modern road approaches Taheri, and 1500 m. farther east by a narrow gorge known as Tang-i-Lir. Kunarak evidently served, as it does



today, as the starting point of the route to the plain of Jamm. Between Kunarak and the Sheikh's fort two additional spurs project from the south side of the first ridge. The larger spur, which is in fact almost parallel to the ridge, extends westwards from Tang-i-Lir for about 1 km. It is separated from the ridge by a valley which retains the thirteenth-century name Shilau. The second, smaller spur lies between the west side of Shilau valley and a gully which enters the bed of Kunarak wadi. The first spur is surmounted by the small ruined structure which the villagers of Taheri miss-identify as a madrasa, and the second by the more extensive ruins of a mosque.

The site of Siraf thus occupies a triangle bounded by the sea, the first ridge and Kunarak wadi, with outlying ruins to the west in the plain of Bagh-i-Shaikh. The whole of this triangle is covered with building debris. N, standing ruin survives and much of the area is used for cultivation by the villagers of Taheri. The surface of the site consists of scattered footings and heaps of rubble, most of which has been removed from garden plots and piled round the edges. Seen from the air, this activity gives the erroneous impression that the plan of whole quarters of Siraf is plainly visible; the "plan", however, is that of the modern fields. Nevertheless, certain features of the city are, or until recently were, immediately obvious. For example, when Stein visited

Siraf he noted the remains of a massive “sea wall” extending along the beach for more than 400 m. on either side of the footings which he correctly identified as a mosque. Nothing of this wall, which was reinforced on the seaward face with triangular and semi-circular buttresses, survives today, although two short sections (which Stien did not record) exist near Site D. In fact, the most Impressive standing remains belong to the mosque, labeled masjid, overlooking Kunarak valley. The mosque belongs to the fourteenth or fifteenth century, but apparently stands on the site of an earlier structure because the vicinity is littered with fragments of tenth-, eleventh- and early twelfth-century grave covers. However, the most spectacular features of Siraf are the cemeteries in Shilou valley. These cover the northern slopes of the valley and consist of numerous rock-cut graves, most of which are now empty. The largest cemetery occupies an abandoned quarry which probably supplied stone for many of the earlier building of Siraf. Finally, outside the medieval city, on the east spit of Taheri Bay, are mounds of debris from a group of pottery kilns with an output similar to the kilns at Site D.



History of Archaeological Surveys in Sirāf Port

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Abstract

The ruined site at Tahiri was first recognized as being the remains of the ancient town and port of Siraf by Captain Kempthorne of the Indian Navy in 1835.

The area immediately to the west of Tahiri village, now referred to as the 'western ared', was surveyed and described by the archaeologist and explorer Sir Aurel Stein in 1937, at which time the, now demolished, sea wall survived to a length of over four hundred metres. Stain indicated on his small scale sketch plan areas where ruins of buildings, cisterns, wells, and rock-cut graves survived at that time.

The same time area west of the modern village was the subject of a more detailed survey at a scale of 1:500 for the British Institute of Persian Studies during the 1960s and is shortly to be published. This revealed extensive evidence for masonry structures and associated cemeteries over an area in excess of two hundred hectares, much of which is located on the rocky slopes which form the northern part of the site. This represents a wide period of occupation and particularly the surface evidence for the later periods. However, excavations on the lower slopes to the sea, for example at the Great Mosque (Site B), have indicated evidence greater depths of deposit which contain for earlier occupation, in this case remains of a Sasanian period fort.

It is understood that since the 1960s the site has suffered form coastal erosion by the sea and the effects of the earthquake which badly damaged the ancient city of Bam in December

2003. It is also believed that some new development has also taken place on the remains of Siraf at Tahiri.

In his lecture to the International Siraf Conference, Fred Aldsworth, who undertook the survey of the site in 1968-69, will not only describe the previous archaeological surveys but will also provide an account of the findings, which include evidence for defenses; water capture, management and storage; an enclosed harbor; quarries; rock-cut cemeteries; elements of the town plan, such as industrial and residential zones; and a wide range of building plans.

It is intended that copies of the site plans prepared by the British Institute of Persian Studies will be available for the site visit to Siraf during the congress and can be used in discussions concerning the future protection of the historical remains in relation to the expanding activities of the South Pars Oil and Gas field.

The existence of ruins at Tāherī was reported in 1812 and they were first identified as being the remains of the ancient port called Sīrāf in 1835.

The first survey and description of the site was prepared one hundred years later by Sir Aurel Stein. Stein was born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1862. He became an archaeologist and explorer and spent much of his life in India. He is particularly well known for his numerous expeditions to investigate the ancient Silk Road through central Asia and the coastal routes associated with it. His first expedition was in 1900 and this was followed by others in 1906, 1913, and 1930. As well as making careful notes of his travels he took many photographs, surveyed



many sites, and published the results. He died in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1943.

It was during the last of his expeditions that Stein passed through Tāherī in 1933. He must have spent some considerable time on the site and in 1938 he published the results of his visit, which included not only a description but also some photographs and a detailed sketch map.

On his plan, Stein noted extensive areas where ruins of houses existed in cultivated areas and he also identified the positions of cistern or water tanks, wells and areas of rock-cut graves.

Between 1966 and 1973 the British School of Persian Studies undertook a large program of survey and excavation, under the direction of Dr. David Whitehouse. Whilst the survey work was concentrated in the area previously mapped by Sir Aurel Stein, it also continued to the east and west. The area to the west of the village of Tāherī was drawn at a scale of 1:500 to beyond the Kunārak river, where evidence for a town wall was found, with some evidence for settlement beyond it. Work to the east of the village identified traces of settlement as far as Rūd-khāne kuchek where another town wall was found. The distance between the two town walls is about 3500metres.

Although there were some remains surviving as standing buildings or as structures exposed by coastal erosion, we first noted that there were a few walls exposed on the surface of the cultivated fields and beyond them on the rocky slopes. As we began to survey these walls onto our plans we began to see whole courtyard buildings being revealed and eventually this work led to the identification of complete blocks of buildings, often with narrow passages and streets between them.

Each plan we produced covered an area of three hundred metres by two hundred metres, each 100metres square being one hectare of land. As we began to put the plans together an overall plan of large parts of the town began to emerge.

In addition to small houses, we surveyed some larger buildings, stone quarries, aqueducts, cisterns, wells, cemeteries and the town wall, with fortifications and a gate.

With the evidence of the survey and the excavations we can now say quite a lot about the town plan of Sīrāf.

Sīrāf is located on a narrow coastal plain on the southern edge of the southern Zagros mountains, which comprise a series of ridges running parallel to the coast. The last of these is the

Bakhtārī escarpment of sandstone and conglomerate and this forms the steeply-sloping northern part of the site. Beyond it to the north is a lower area known as the Dōband valley, from which a number of seasonal watercourses issue. The ridge of higher land actually reaches the coast at the village of Tāherī and it is here that a fort was built in about 1920. To either side the flatter land of the coastal plain varies in width from nothing to about one thousand metres. At each end of the site seasonal rivers, known as the Kunārak and the Rūd-khāne kuchek have cut through the ridge and have deposited soil in the form of two projecting pieces of land on either side of a bay. A smaller watercourse, the Shīlāu, has also cut a narrow gorge through the ridge at Tang-i-Līr and has made a small valley which divides this part of the site into two and has created a smaller projecting piece of land.

The ruins of Sīrāf survive clearly on the surface of the higher ground and close to the surface, and partly obscured by cultivation, on the lower ground.

What can we say about the town plan?

The Stone Quarries

Many of the buildings of Sīrāf were built from sandstone quarried on the slopes of the northern part of the site. When the

stone was being cut a number of features were created, such as stone columns, water catchments system, steps and wells. Several of the quarries were later used as cemeteries.

The Defences

When Sir Aurel Stein visited the site he noted the 'Total absence of indications that the town was protected by defences anywhere on the land side'. However, he did record the remains of what he called a quay wall surviving to about 5metres high and about 450metres long which he photographed and included on his plan. Only a small fragment of this survived in the 1960s.

The town would have been protected on the north side by the natural steep slopes of the Dōband valley.

Excavations on the site of the Great Mosque have now identified the remains of a Sasanian-period fort.

As I mentioned earlier, our surveys have also revealed evidence for walls across the coastal plain which formed defences enclosing a town extending over a distance of 3.5kilometres along the coast. The west wall has now been traced for a distance of 1.5metres. It begins on the west point, where it is associated with a large building, currently interpreted as a warehouse. The wall includes both round and pointed towers on



the outside face and the remains of a gate have also been found. Towards the north end a small fort may have protected a gate providing access into the town from the Kunārak and Dōband valleys.

So the town was protected on all sides by natural slopes and man-made defences but, as yet, we do not know whether they were all used at the same time.

Water Supply And Management

We have identified at least nine aqueducts entering the town. They are usually about 35centimetres wide and are either cut in the rock or built as a channel lined with plaster or *sārūj*.

The longest aqueduct brought water from a dam and pond in the Kunārak valley, over a distance of 5kilometres to the town. At one point it crosses the valley and can be traced alongside the inside of the west wall of the town. It had been diverted into houses at several points and may have eventually led to the bathhouse near the warehouse.

At Tang-i-Līr, Stein had photographed the pair of round stone towers on either side of the narrowest part of the gorge and this is where the aqueduct was carried across the opening.

Water was also collected in wells some of which, like those in the stone quarries, were designed to catch water running down the bottom of the quarry.

Water was also stored in stone-built cisterns, usually rectangular or oval in plan, either on their own or in groups. Each had an arched roof over the top. Many of these appear to have been associated with individual houses.

Cemeteries

There are extensive remains of rock-cut cemeteries on the rock slopes which form the north part of the site. The largest are on the floors of the abandoned quarries, where they are served by stone steps. The graves have grooves to support stone slabs over the body. There are also several standing pillars of unquarried stone.

As well as rock-cut graves there are a number of burial chambers cut in vertical rock faces. They seem to have been for collective burial and were sealed with plaster.

There are also a number of stone covers still in position and others have been found scattered about the site.



On a piece of high ground overlooking the west end of the city, the survey identified a group of square buildings which have been found to be monumental tombs for the collective disposal of the dead. Ten have been excavated and found to contain between six and fifty-two skeletons.

Industrial Zone

There was an extensive pottery works at the south-west corner of the city and this was first exposed by coastal erosion. Excavations have identified several workshops and thirty kilns.

The City Plan

The survey and excavations have indicated that the evidence is in two parts.

On the higher ground to the north and north-east, mostly over ten metres above sea level, many walls survive on the surface of the rocky slopes. On the lower ground of the coastal plain many of the buildings are below the present surface and are covered by soil which is cultivated but here excavations have shown that building remains survive in places down to depths of about seven metres. For this reason we know much more about the layout of the buildings and the city on the higher ground than on the lower ground. It seems likely that the pattern of closely-

packed buildings and narrow streets we see on the higher ground would be repeated on the lower ground, although the walls survive to a much greater height where they have been buried for a long time.

On the higher ground a large number of house plans are visible. Using evidence of surviving street surfaces and spaces between the buildings, it is not difficult to reconstruct the original plan of streets and narrow alleyways between them (Figure 6).

Survey and excavations have indicated a very wide range of building types. In addition to public buildings, such as the Great Mosque, some small buildings near the sea have been interpreted as a bazaar.

All the houses appear to have been of the courtyard type and vary greatly in size and complexity (Figure 7). The smallest seem to have comprised only a few rooms on one side of a yard whilst the larger ones, perhaps owned by wealthy merchants, have ranges of rooms on two, three or all four sides of a central courtyard. There appear also to have been a few larger properties, with several buildings grouped around a large central area, and the largest of these has been interpreted as a palatial



residence, perhaps the house of a leading merchant or an official of the city.

To summarise, the remains of the port and city of Sīrāf cover an area of over 200 hectares. On the rocky slopes the buildings and other remains can be seen on the surface, but nearer the sea there are remains buried up to seven metres deep. The site is an important port-city of Islamic civilisation of the 4th and 5th centuries AH. It needs to be protected in relation to the expanding activities of the South Pars Oil and Gas Field and a number of questions may be asked by the Congress –

Should the site be adapted for visitors?

How should the buildings be conserved for display?

How can the site be protected from damage?

Should there be a restriction on where new buildings are allowed to be built?

Should there be a control over the depth of excavation for foundations of new buildings?

Should new buildings be limited to one storey in height?

Should more archaeological excavations be undertaken?

Is more survey needed?

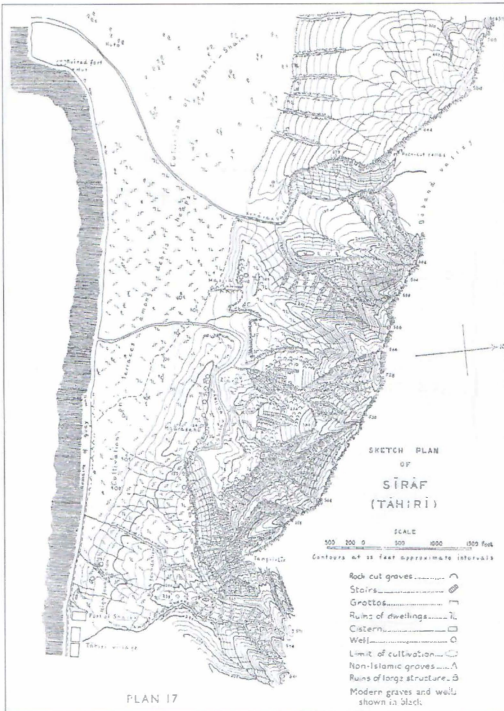


Figure 1 : Sir Aurel Stein's map of Sīrāf
(Reproduced by kind permission Macmillan & Co Ltd and
the British Institute of Persian Studies)

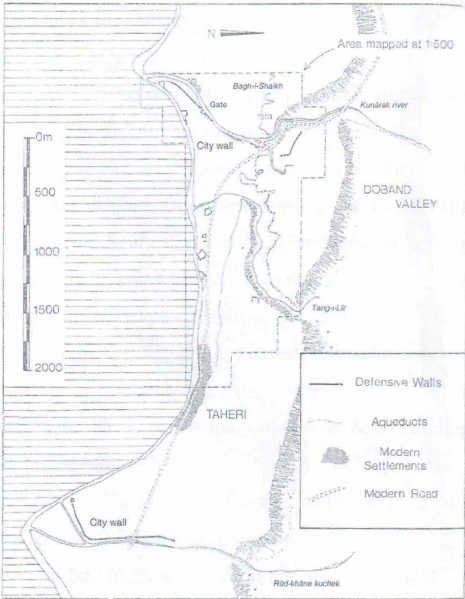


Figure 2 : General location map of the site
(Reproduced by kind permission of the British Institute of Persian Studies)

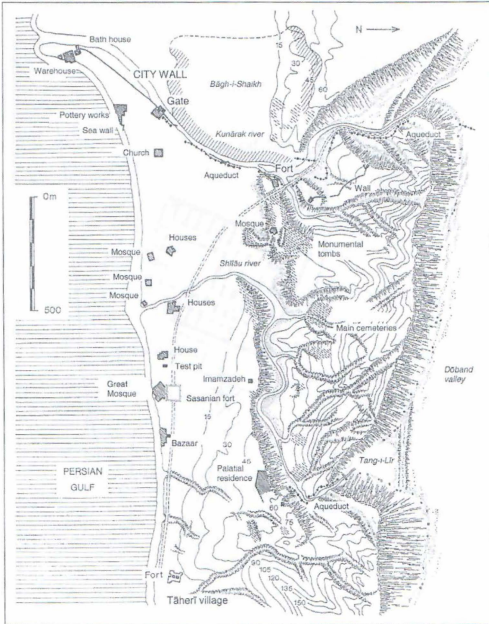


Figure 3 : General plan, showing some of the main features
(Reproduced by kind permission of the British Institute of Persian Studies).

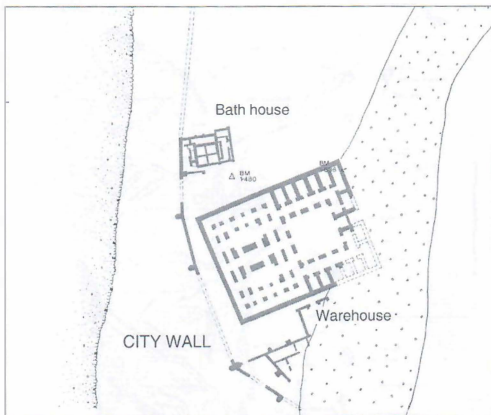


Figure 4 : The south end of the west wall
(Reproduced by kind permission of the British Institute of Persian Studies).

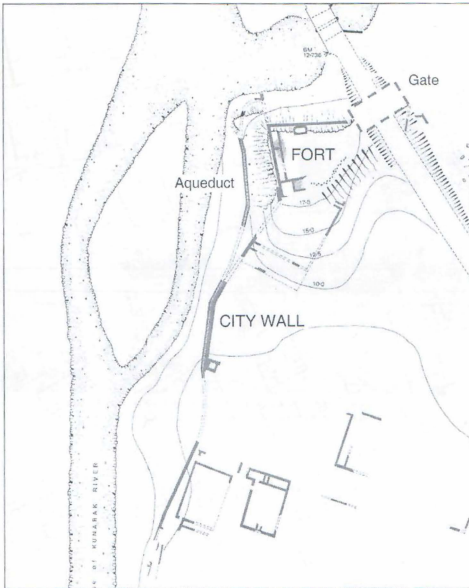


Figure 5 : The north end of the west wall
(Reproduced by kind permission of the British Institute of Persian Studies).



Figures 6 and 7 : Some of the houses and streets of Sirāf.
(Reproduced by kind permission of the British Institute of Persian Studies.



Plate 1 : Sir Aurel Stein's photograph of the quay wall
(Reproduced by kind permission of Macmillan & Co Ltd)



Plate 2 : Sir Aurel Stein's photograph of the aqueduct at Tang-i-Lir.
(Reproduced by kind permission of Macmillan & Co Ltd)



Plate 3 : Sir Aurel Stein's photograph of the main cemetery.
(Reproduced by kind permission of Macmillan & Co Ltd)



The port of Siraf: Historical Memory and Iran's role in the Persian Gulf

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Abstract

This paper will investigate the historical role of Siraf in the Persian Gulf and its importance to Iranian history more generally. The Persian Gulf coast is often neglected in general histories of Iran, yet in the Sasanian and early Islamic period Iran's dominance of the region helped establish it as a major regional power. The memory of Siraf, the most important port on the Persian Gulf from about 800 to 1000 AD, has become an important part of Iran's cultural legacy. It also served as a model and inspiration for the wealthy and powerful ports that succeeded it, Kish and Hormuz, and the three ports together dominated the Persian Gulf for a period of seven centuries. Their prosperity was built on strong commercial relations with China and the Indian Ocean world, starting in the Sasanian period. Several issues will be addressed: why were all these cities located on the northern side of the Gulf, and what accounts for their migration southward, from Siraf to Kish and finally Hormuz?

What kind of political ties did they have with each other and with the dominant powers on the Iranian plateau such as the Buyids, the Mongols or their successors? What were their connections with the interior and how did the political formations in these small ports differ from that of Iranian cities on the plateau? In what ways was Siraf similar or different from ports in the Arabian sphere, such as Qalhat or Basra?

Why, in more modern times beginning with the Safavid period, did these ports fall into disuse, such that they were insignificant

by the time of the Qajars? Finally, what is the significance today for the legacy of Siraf and Iran's role as a Persian Gulf power? This paper seeks to address these issues.

Iran's historic role in the Persian Gulf, and its rightful predominance there, has always been self-evident to Iranians. The historical memory of Persian domination of the Gulf during the Sasanian and early Islamic period, and much later during the 18th century under Nadir Shah, have formed the background to later demands that territory once under Iranian control be returned to it, including Bahrain and several well-known islands. The Gulf, indeed, forms part of Iran's cultural heritage, and in modern times any suggestion that it is not Persian has led to clashes with its Arab neighbors. Clearly, the past is important to Iranians and memory of it contributes to Iranian identity and, in modern times, Iranian nationalism.

This paper seeks to explore the attachment of Iranians to the Persian Gulf and to review the historical circumstances that led to the rise of powerful port cities there in the pre-Mongol period. For eight centuries starting around 800 AD, Siraf, Kish and Hormuz in turn became glittering emporiums on the Iranian coast, whose riches were based on seaborne trade with China and India. In each case these polities and the prosperity they created were destroyed. Their example, however, proved an



inspiration to Iranian leaders in the future, from Nader Shah to Nasir al-Din Shah to the Pahlavi monarchs and leaders of the Islamic Republic to maintain Iran's influence in the Persian Gulf.¹

A number of issues arise from reviewing these little-studied and poorly documented polities. What circumstances led to the rise of these ports in the first place, and later to their demise? Why were all the important ports in the Gulf located along its northern littoral and not on the Arab side? What accounts for a migration eastward of power? How were these ports tied to their hinterlands, and in what way were they related to others on or near the Gulf? What kind of political life typified them, and how did this differ from that of better-known cities on the Iranian plateau? Finally, what accounts for their continued importance and relevance today? Why, a millennium after its collapse, are we having a conference about Siraf?

Gulf history and society

Although high Persian culture, including literature and art, was largely a product of the great cities on the Iranian plateau such

¹ For brief overviews of the Persian Gulf in the early Islamic period see Roger M. Savory, "A.D. 600-1800," in *The Persian Gulf States: A General Survey*, ed. Alvin J. Cottrell, et. al. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 14-20 and chapter 7 in Arnold T. Wilson, *The Persian Gulf: An Historical Sketch from the Earliest Times to the beginning of the Twentieth Century* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1928; repr. 1959).

as Isfahan, Shiraz, Tabriz and Herat, *Iran-zamin* consisted of many different regions, including the Gulf coast. This region, however, had characteristics making it different from inland cities. The Gulf world was united by a maritime environment and an economy based on pearling and the long-distance dhow trade. Tribes traveled freely back and forth across the Gulf, and some had sections on both sides, most famously the Qawasim based in Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah who temporarily governed Bandar Lengeh. Settlements along the coast often had closer relations with those on the Arab side than those in the interior, due to ease of communication. Most Gulf residents then and now were and are bilingual or multilingual. The Gulf was oriented outward, toward the Indian Ocean, rather than inward toward the Middle East, and was part of a cosmopolitan world of mixed race, religion and ethnicity¹. The port cities under discussion here probably had more regular ties with trading partners in India or Africa than with cities such as Isfahan or

¹ See the illuminating overview of Gulf history by M.R. Izady, "The Gulf's Ethnic Diversity: An Evolutionary History," in *Security in the Persian Gulf: Origins, Obstacles, and the Search for Consensus*, ed. Lawrence Potter and Gary Sick (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 33-90. Regarding the cosmopolitan nature of Gulf cities, the Bhackers say of Qalhat: "The society was clearly cosmopolitan, comprising wealthy Persianised-Arab Hormuzi notables and a mixed Arab merchant class, supported by communities of fishermen and cultivators. To this we can add an artisanal class of potters...." (Mohammed Redha Bhacker and Bernadette Bhacker, "Qalhat in Arabian History: Context and Chronicles," in *The Journal of Oman Studies*, vol. 13 (2004), p. 43.)



Tehran. (It is not surprising, therefore, to learn that many fine houses in Siraf were built of teak, imported from Zanzibar.¹)

The history of the Persian Gulf has been regularly neglected in the work of Iranian historians and retrieving it is a daunting prospect. Most works of history written in Persian since the time of the Mongols naturally focus on politics on the plateau and are not too concerned with the southern coastline.² This includes major historians such as Rashid al-Din, Khwandamir, and Hafiz Abru. The fact that Iran was governed by dynasties of Turkish origin for a millennium starting around 1000 AD naturally oriented their interests to the north, not the south. Two key works on the history of Siraf and Kish are now lost, although

¹ Ya'qub b. 'Abd-Allah al-Hamawi Yaqut, *Mu'jam al-buldan*. Section on Persia translated by Casimir Barbier de Meynard as *Dictionnaire Géographique, Historique et Littéraire de la Perse et des Contrées Adjacentes* (Paris, 1861; reprint Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1970), p. 332. This is typical of the situation for other Gulf cities. With no wood to be had in the Gulf, mangrove poles were commonly imported from East Africa for building purposes and wood for shipbuilding often came from India. (See Alan Villiers, "Some Aspects of the Arab Dhow Trade", in *The Middle East Journal* 2 (1948): 399, 414-15.)

² A similar problem has plagued historians of Oman. According to the Bhackers, "...the main aim of the Omani chronicler in centuries past was to chart the life and times of the ruling dynasties and Imams of interior Oman. The cosmopolitan, outward-looking world of the merchants, ship owners and *nakhodas* (ships' captains) who inhabited Qalhat was entirely peripheral to the concerns of the chronicler." See "Qalhat in Arabian History," 14.

some of the information they contain has been transmitted by others.¹

The medieval Islamic geographers, who wrote from the 9th to the 11th centuries AD, do provide valuable information about the Gulf ports.² All scholars aiming to learn about Siraf, Kish and Hormuz must start with the brief descriptions left by writers such as Masudi (943), Istakhri (951), Ibn Hawqal (978) and Muqaddasi (985). All of them, we note, were writing when Siraf was at the height of its splendor. By the time of the visit by Yaqut in the early 1200s, Siraf had fallen on hard times and the geographer found it hard to believe that it had once been a glorious city.³ Following him, there are brief descriptions by

¹ For Kish, *Tarikh-i muluk-i Bani Qaysar* (see Jean Aubin, "La ruine de Siraf et les routes du Golfe Persique aux XI et XII siècles," in *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale X-XII Siècles* (Université de Poitiers), Tome II (1959), p. 298); for Hormuz, a *Shahnameh* written by the prince Turanshah after 1350, some of which was translated into Portuguese.

² Gerald Blake, Heather Bleaney, David Imrie and Richard Lawless, "Geographers of the Persian Gulf," in Cottrell, *The Persian Gulf States*, pp. 101-20. See also W. Barthold, *An Historical Geography of Iran*, trans. Svat Soucek (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 142-47 & 160-61 and G. Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate: Mesopotamia, Persia, and Central Asia from the Moslem conquest to the time of Timur* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905; repr. Lahore: Al-Biruni, 1977), pp. 232-47.

³ Yaqut, *Mu'jam al-buldan*, pp. 331-33.



Mustawfi (1340)¹ and Ibn Battuta², who visited the Gulf in 1331-32 and again 15 years later. Then there is a long silence. By late Qajar times the small port of Bandar Tahiri is mentioned, with nearby Siraf standing in ruins.³

The rise of Siraf: historical framework

The rise and fall of Siraf, like other port cities, was linked to the political situation in the larger Islamic world.⁴ The Muslim conquest of Sind in 711 enlarged the *dar al-Islam* and led to greatly expanded trade with the Islamic heartland. The rise of the Abbasids after 750 AD and their establishment of a capital at Baghdad led to a “Golden Age” that reached its apogee under

¹ Hamd-Allah Mostowfi, *The Geographical Part of the Nuzhat-al-Qulub composed by Hamd-Allah Mustawfi of Qazwin in 740 (1340)*, trans. G. Le Strange. E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series, 23 (Leyden: E.J. Brill and London: Luzac & Co., 1919), p. 116.

² Ibn Battuta, Muhammad b. ‘Abd-Allah, *Rihla*, trans. H.A.R. Gibb as *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, A.D. 1325-1354*. 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Hakluyt Society, 1958-71).

³ J.G. Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia*, Volume II (Calcutta, 1908; reprint Farnham Common, England: Archive Editions, 1986), in vol. 9, pp. 1853-54; George N. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1892; reprint 1966), vol. 2, p. 406.

⁴ For an overview of the general situation, see André Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, vol. 1, *Early Medieval India and the Expansion of Islam, 7th-11th Centuries* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 53-59 and vol. 2, *The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquest 11th-13th Centuries* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 17-19.

Harun al-Rashid (ruled 786–809). Strong consumer demand in Baghdad and other cities for luxuries of the East meant a reinvigorated seaborne commerce between the Gulf and the Indian Ocean world.¹

The basis of prosperity for Siraf and the other major ports was this trade. Voyages from the Gulf to China took about six months. Ships would depart in September or October on the northeast monsoon, and return to the Gulf on the southwest monsoon in April.² This connection is illustrated by the large quantities of Chinese ceramics found at Siraf in the excavations of the 1960s and 1970s. According to Whitehouse, Chinese wares made a sudden appearance in the Gulf around the year 800, and trade thrived during the 9th century.³

At this time, Siraf was the principal city on the Iranian coast, while on the Arabian side Suhar, Julfar and Muscat were key links in the network of port cities. At the head of the Gulf were Ubulla, the main port of the Sasanids, where larger ships

¹ See George F. Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Medieval Times*, revised and expanded by John Carswell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 61-82.

² Savory in Cottrell, *The Persian Gulf States*, 17.

³ David Whitehouse and Andrew Williamson, "Sasanian Maritime Trade," in *Iran* 11 (1973), esp. pp. 48-49.



docked, and nearby Basra, founded in 638 AD. Because of hazards in navigating in this area, however, many ships in the China trade preferred to visit Siraf and offload their cargoes to smaller ships for the trip up the Gulf. Ships were often wrecked on the sandbars near Abadan,¹ while the Shatt al-Arab, filled with wrecks and with dangerous currents, “was one of the most dangerous waterways in Asia.”²

Adverse developments in Iraq after the mid-ninth century led to Siraf becoming the leading emporium in the Gulf.³ The slave revolts of the Zanj in southern Iraq in 868-83 led to widespread destruction. Basra was largely destroyed in 871 and was sacked again by the Carmathians in 923. Under the period of Buyid rule (932-1044), trade through the Gulf increased, especially when the empire was at its zenith under ‘Adud al-Daula (r. 949-83).⁴ In 966 he temporarily imposed Buyid rule on Oman; an expedition in 970-72 captured Suhar and the following year conquered the mountainous interior.⁵

¹ Hourani, 69-70.

² R. J. Barendse, *The Arabian Seas: The Indian Ocean World of the Seventeenth Century* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), p. 40.

³ Savory in Cottrell, *The Persian Gulf States*, 17.

⁴ Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. 1, 55.

Decline of Siraf

By the 11th century, however, the international political situation had changed and the trade of the Gulf was in serious decline. In the west, the Fatimid conquest of Egypt in 969 led the authorities to promote the Red Sea route and consequently the rise of Jidda.¹ In the east, the trade with China had already started to decline following a major revolt against the ruling T'ang dynasty in 878 and the looting of Canton and massacre of many foreign merchants there.²

The arrival of the Saljuq Turks and their entry into Baghdad in 1055 led to a new and powerful Sunni dynasty on the plateau, and the beginning of a process of large-scale migration of Turkic tribesmen into Iran. Like other major Iranian dynasties, the Saljuqs were focused on the north. Revolts by the Shabankara tribe in Fars led to economic decline there and in ports like Siraf which were dependent upon it. A local Saljuq dynasty was established in Kirman in 1048 under Qawurd (the son of Chagri Beg), which lasted for a century and a half. He launched raids on the Omani coast, overthrowing the Buyid

⁵ Ch. Bürgel and R. Mottahedeh, "'Azod-al-Dawla,'" in *Encyclopædia Iranica* 3, p. 266.

¹ This favoring of the Red Sea route lasted for three centuries under the Fatimids (969-1171) and Ayyubids (1171-1250).

² Savory in Cottrell, *The Persian Gulf States*, pp. 15-18.



governors still in place, and the Saljuqs occupied Oman until 1167.¹ This led to the introduction of a new Turkic element in the Gulf, the enhancement of the north-south trade route,² and a political link between Kirman and Qalhat.

A number of developments led to the decline of Siraf around the year 1000. The best known is the major earthquake lasting seven days which ravaged the city in 977 and ruined its harbor. But there were other long-term factors. Under the aegis of the Saljuqs in Kirman, the trade of the Gulf was diverted from Siraf to its rival, Kish.³ As Aubin notes, the amirs of Kish had a bad reputation as the corsairs of the Gulf, and an upsurge of piracy was able to block trade coming up the Gulf to Siraf. Apparently the final ruin of Siraf was caused by Kish's ruler, Rukn al-Din Khumartagin.⁴

Siraf was in decline at the time of the writing of the *Fars-nameh* around 1100.⁵ Aubin dates the final emigration of people from

¹ Bhacker, 30

² Wink, *Al-Hind*, 19.

³ Wink, 58

⁴ According to the *Farsnameh*. In Le Strange, 258.

⁵ C. Edmund Bosworth, "Ebn al-Balki," in *Encyclopædia Iranica* 8, p. 4.

Siraf to Kish around 1110, at which point the inland town of Fal succeeded Siraf as the capital of the district.¹ Kish became the major emporium on the Gulf until the rise of Hormuz in the early 13th century.

The rise and fall of port cities

One striking fact about port cities in the Gulf is that many have had only a temporary period of fluorescence. Indeed, it seems like Iranian ports have arisen and fallen as often as have capital cities on the plateau. Each city had its moment of glory: for Siraf, it was around 850-1000 AD; for Kish, 1000-1200; and for Hormuz, from 1300 until 1600. Bushire became the major Iranian port from the 1730s to the 1920s, then Khorramshahr until 1980, and Bandar Abbas since that time.² In each case the replacement of a port was due to its destruction, either because of the harbor silting up, earthquake, or war. The alteration of ports was also evident on the Arab side of the Gulf. For example, towns that had been important in the early 19th century such as Ras al-Khaimah and Sharjah were later eclipsed

¹ Jean Aubin, "La Survie de Shilau et la Route du Khunj-o-Fal," in *Iran* 7 (1969), p. 24.

² X. de Planhol, "Bandar-e 'Abbas," in *Encyclopædia Iranica* 3 (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1989), pp. 685-87; X. de Planhol, "Bushehr," *Encyclopædia Iranica* 4 (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1990), pp. 569-72.



by Dubai and Abu Dhabi.¹ What is the reason for this alteration? There are geological, hydrological and political factors at play.

In terms of geography, all the important port cities were located on the northern shore of the Gulf because the water was deeper there and it was therefore easier to navigate.² (For the same reason, it was not so good for pearling.) The fact that the Iranian coastline always had a settled population, with the possibility to supply ships with food and water, as well as offer a route to inland trading centers such as Shiraz, always made the presence of cities there more likely than on the southern shore.

This is not to say the Iranian harbors were good; in fact, the opposite was the case. Yaqut, who visited Siraf after the earthquake, mentions that it did not have a harbor, and that ships had to proceed 2 farsakhs to Nabad [Naband] for an anchorage sheltered from the wind.³ Kish and Hormuz are, of course, islands that may have offered better anchorages. Kish is located 11 miles off the mainland and has deep water just outside the

¹ See for example Peter Lienhardt, *Shaikhdoms of Eastern Arabia* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 116.

² Kimbriel Mitchell et al., "Appendix A: The Persian Gulf," in Cottrell, *The Persian Gulf States*, p. 541.

³ Yaqut, *Mu'jam al-buldan*, p. 332. One farsakh/farsang equals about 6 kilometers.

reef surrounding it.¹ Hormuz is four miles off the mainland (and 11 miles from Bandar Abbas).

In modern times, ships stopping on the Iranian coast commonly have had to anchor far offshore and transfer goods by lighter. Thus at Bushire an inner anchorage was located 3 miles from shore with minimum depths of 18 feet, and an outer anchorage 7 miles off shore with minimum depths of 36 feet.² At Bandar Abbas the anchorage was 3 miles offshore.³ At Taheri, however, there was an anchorage with 48 feet of water only one half a mile offshore.⁴

Ecology and hinterland

In considering the Iranian emporia in the Gulf, the great conundrum is how such poor sites could support great and prosperous cities. Obviously, these towns were not self supporting in food and water; Hormuz, the greatest of them,

¹ Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf*, "Qais," pp. 1471-74; "Hormuz Island," pp. 747—50.

² [British] Naval Intelligence Division, *Persia*, Geographical Handbook Series (n.p., 1945), p. 502.

³ *Ibid.*, 500.

⁴ Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf*, p. 1853.



with an estimated population of 50,000,¹ was completely barren. It is hard to believe that Siraf was once the leading port in the Gulf, eclipsing Basra and, according to Istakhri, being almost as large as Shiraz. Muqaddasi says that the houses in Siraf were the finest he had ever seen, and Istakhri remarks that Sirafi merchants were the richest in Fars.² In the late 10th century Siraf was full of merchants and was referred to as “the emporium of Fars.”³

It is clear that the prosperity of the city was built completely on commerce, as physical conditions there were difficult in the extreme. The town was located on a narrow coastal plain, a long distance (60 farsakhs) from the nearest major city on the plateau, Shiraz. Siraf was the hottest town in the country, according to Istakhri and, according to Ibn Hawqal, had no trees⁴. It had extremely poor soil and received less than 300 mm of rainfall annually. Whitehouse estimates that about 700 hectares near

¹ According to Aubin.

² Istakhri in Le Strange, 258; Muqaddasi in Wilson, 94.

³ *Hudud al-'Alam: 'The Regions of the World'. A Persian Geography 372 A.H.-982 A.D.*, 2nd ed., trans. V. Minorsky. E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series, New Series, 11 (London: Luzac, 1970), p.127.

⁴ Citation of Istakhri and Ibn Hawkel in Wilson, 94

Siraf were cultivated, with at least 72% of the land irrigated.¹ The key to provisioning Siraf were the rich valleys of Jam and Galehdar behind the city.

Migration of ports and people

One of the intriguing issues regarding the medieval Iranian emporiums on the Iranian coast was their migration eastward in the Gulf over the centuries: from Rishahr/Bushehr, to Siraf, to Kish, and finally to Hormuz. Why did this happen? The reasons appear to be both economic and ecological. In the first place, the *raison d'être* for cities such as Siraf was international trade. But trade and people could and did move to other locations depending on changing conditions, such as the shift in trade routes from Shiraz to Kerman. The fall of Siraf could be compensated by the rise of another port which could just as easily serve as a terminus for trade from the East. Persian was widely spoken throughout the Gulf, including Sohar.² Aubin found that after the fall of Siraf many Sirafis migrated to the inland town of Fal, to the Omani town of Sohar, to the island of Kish and undoubtedly Hormuz.³ After the fall of Siraf, Kish and

¹ David Whitehouse, "Excavations at Siraf: Sixth Interim Report," in *Iran* 12 (1974), pp. 2, 5.

² According to Masudi. In Cottrell, 16



Hormuz became rivals for the trade with India, with Hormuz prevailing after the 1330s.¹

As mentioned earlier, there was an ease of circulation in the Gulf such that people or tribes on one side could move freely to the other. There were many Arabs on the Iranian side (especially in the 18th and 19th centuries) as well as Persians on the Arab side. In some cases towns may have exhausted their ecological base. Bad times could lead to large-scale population movement. This happened notably in 18th century Arabia, where a drought pushed tribes toward the coast and led to the establishment of ruling dynasties in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar. The crash of the pearl industry in the Gulf in the 1930s led many to emigrate. Likewise, people dissatisfied with their ruler could always migrate to another area, and they frequently did up until the 20th century.²

³ Jean Aubin, "La ruine de Siraf et les routes du Golfe Persique aux Xie et XIIe siècles," in *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale, Xe-XIIe Siècles*, Tome II (Poitiers), 1959, p. 297-98.

¹ Peter Morgan, "New Thoughts on Old Hormuz: Chinese Ceramics in the Hormuz Region in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," in *Iran* 29 (1991), pp. 69, 70.

² "The Authority of Shaykhs in the Gulf: An Essay in Nineteenth-Century History" by Peter Lienhardt, in *Arabian Studies* 2 (1975): 72-73.

If for any reason a town was no longer viable, therefore, for environmental or political reasons, people could simply move on, and abandoned towns are certainly not unusual in Iran. The decline of Qalhat has many parallels with that of Siraf: local power struggles played a role, but the Portuguese diversion of the trade to Muscat was the final blow.¹ As in the case of Siraf, the town lapsed into obscurity.

The Gulf in Iran's historical memory

After the establishment of the Safavid dynasty and the development of a strong national identity based on Shiite Islam and Iranian culture, interest in Iran's historic role in the Persian Gulf increased. The expulsion of the Portuguese from Hormuz in 1622 led to the development of Bandar Abbas as an important Gulf port that was named for a shah who took a personal interest in the area. In the 1740s Nadir Shah "stroved to revive the ancient Persian mastery of the sea" by establishing a navy and temporarily establishing control over Bahrain and Oman.² With a fleet of 30 ships, Nader had the most powerful Persian armada in the region until modern times.³ After the collapse of the

¹ Bhacker, 50

² L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: A Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London, 1938; repr. Jalandhar, India: Asian Publishers, 1993), p. 221.



Afsharid empire, a number of independent Arab principalities established themselves along the Iranian shoreline.

For a long time the Qajar monarchs, who came to power in the late 18th century, were not interested in the Gulf or able to assert themselves there, being cut off by poor communications and preoccupied with threats from the northeast and northwest. But in 1845 the Persian Prime Minister, Hajji Mirza Aghassi, claimed all the waters and islands of the Gulf as Persian.¹ Finally, in 1885, the Tehran government acquired a ship, the Persepolis, to patrol the Gulf.²

It was not until late in the 19th century, however, that the Tehran government was able to reassert control over its Gulf littoral, reclaiming Bandar Abbas from Oman in 1868 and in 1887 evicting the (Arab) Qasimi shaikhs who had long ruled Bander Langeh. By about 1890, the Persian government was “exercising along its shores and over its islands a more extended

³ Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, chapter 21.

¹ Cited in Richard Schofield, “Anything but Black and White: A Commentary on the Lower Gulf Islands Dispute,” in *Security in the Persian Gulf*, ed. Potter and Sick, p. 184.

² Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, p. 394.

and emphatic authority than at almost any previous epoch during the last 300 years,” according to Lord Curzon.¹

Siraf's later history

Although there are numerous references to Siraf in the literature of the pre-Mongol period, after this time there is practically no mention of it in Persian literature until modern times. It was not until the city was “re-discovered” by western travelers and archaeologists that Iranians were reminded of its famous legacy. The site of Siraf was first brought to the attention of Europeans in 1835, and attracted a few visitors thereafter who remarked on its poor condition.

Probably because of its strategic location on the barren Persian coast, even though the town's glory days were over it was often the seat of local political authority. The revival of the fortunes of Shiraz in the 13th century probably were reflected in Siraf. A mosque was constructed there in the 14th or 15th century, which Aubin reckons corresponded to a revival there.² In the 19th century, Bandar Taheri was prosperous enough to have an Iranian customs post, and its ships traded with Basra, Oman, and

¹ Ibid., p. 433.

² Aubin, “La Survie de Shilau”, p. 28.



other Arab Gulf ports.¹ In the early years of the 20th century (probably between 1912-22), a fort was built there with fine stucco decorations of figures from the *Shahnama*. This has no parallels with other forts on either side of the Gulf.² Up until the mid-20th century, Tahiri continued to be the seat of authority for the Nasuri family.³

Siraf's future

Today, because of its proximity to the large Kangan and Nar gas fields located just northwest of the city, and its closeness to the port of Asaluyeh to the south (which is becoming a major center of operations for exploiting gas fields in the Persian Gulf), the preservation of Siraf is of critical importance. So far, Siraf is the only Iranian port to be excavated and the discoveries there offer unique evidence of a great if vanished civilization. On the Arab side of the Gulf, in contrast, there have been extensive and continuing excavations that have clarified much of the history of

¹ Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf*, pp. 1853-54.

² Jennifer M. Scarce, "Princes and Heroes of Bandar-i Tahiri—A Late Qajar Fort and the *Shahnama*," in *Cairo to Kabul: Afghan and Islamic Studies presented to Ralph Pinder-Wilson*, ed. Warwick Ball and Leonard Harrow (London: Melisende, 2002), pp. 181-93.

³ Shahnaz Nadjmabadi, "'Arabisiert' oder 'iranisiert'? Siedlungsgeschichte in der iranischen Provinz Hormozgan am Persischen Golf," in *Welt des Islam* 45, 1 (2005), pp. 108-50.

its southern shore.¹ In the rush to develop petroleum resources that is so important for Iran today, it is essential that the site of Siraf be preserved, for scholars, tourists and indeed the wider Iranian public. It is a timely reminder of Iran's historic role in the Persian Gulf, and could be developed as a major tourist attraction. The history of the Persian Gulf is a story of the rise and fall of cities, and in this narrative Siraf may have another role to play.

¹ For example, D.T. Potts, *The Arabian Gulf in Antiquity*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).



The material culture of Siraf – 8th to 11th centuries

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Abstract

The range of material culture found during the extensive excavations at Siraf presents a picture of a prosperous city trading with many places, but also with its own manufacturing capabilities. Glass and stone vessels were both manufactured at Siraf, and metal working took place within the city, probably in specific areas; spinning, dyeing, and presumably weaving, would have been household activities. The limited number and relatively small size of both iron and copper alloy objects, together with the very small amount of lead recovered, indicates that recycling of metals was routine and efficient, and this is further supported by the evidence for local metal working to produce finished items. It also suggests that the cost of the raw metal was a significant part of the price of any item as it was all imported. The position regarding glass is less clear, even though we know glass vessels were being made at Siraf, as the amount of fragmentary glass recovered suggests that recycling was less of a priority. Objects imported in a finished state made from materials that could not be recycled, such as soap stone vessels, were evidently routinely mended to extend their useful life where possible.

The extent of both sea and overland trade undertaken by the Sirafi merchants is reflected in the remains of the material culture found in the city. Some of the imported commodities were obviously common and everyday objects, such as soap stone vessels, while others reflect the rarer and probably luxury end of the spectrum – gold, silver and talc stone. Beads and spindle whorls were both found in materials that were locally

available or could only have been imported, showing a range of choice available to the local inhabitants who did not have to rely solely on what was made in the near vicinity. Although not the subject of this paper, this picture and the long distance nature of contacts and trade is reinforced by the quantities of Chinese ceramics found in the site from the 8th century onwards, and such oddities as the occasional piece of ostrich eggshell. The East African coastal area is also likely to be the source of the ivory and rock crystal found on the site, while India is the probably source for some of the glass and ceramics. Pottery made at Siraf has been found in Mombasa and other ports on the East African coast showing that Siraf was not only a major entrépôt engaged in moving commodities from place to place, but also exported its own goods to foreign parts.

The material culture of Siraf is extensive and varied and reflects the position of the city as a major trading port, a city with wealthy inhabitants and its own manufacturing capabilities. Pieces of many thousands of objects were recovered during the course of the excavations undertaken in the later 1960s and early 1970s, but this material mainly represents the debris of people and their households that was occasionally lost, but which mostly had been broken and thrown away as it could not be recycled. Although only a small percentage of items amongst these thousands of fragments were complete, they nevertheless provide a unique insight into the possessions of Sirafis living in the city between the 8th and 11th centuries. This paper attempts to present a brief picture of items in everyday use and the personal possessions of the inhabitants. It does not cover the



later finds, such as those from Site E, structural evidence - like stucco, ceramic building materials or stone drains, or coinage and ceramic vessels.

Cities such as Siraf, situated on the coast, have far easier access to both finished items and raw materials from a wide range of far away places than inland towns. Several groups of objects found on the site, for example stone and glass vessels, worked bone and ivory, and beads, demonstrate the twin elements of imported and locally manufactured goods available in Siraf during its heyday.

Stone vessels

Stone vessels were an important commodity at Siraf although this picture is probably biased to some degree because, like pottery, they could not be recycled and did not rot when thrown away. The two types of stone vessels found in large quantities over the whole area were made from either steatite (or soap stone) or a fairly soft semi-translucent milky-white stone called anhydrite. This is a semi-opaque off-white calcium sulphate stone (and has also been called gypsum and even alabaster) which outcrops in the vicinity of Siraf. Most of the anhydrite vessels are small, around 6 to 10cms in diameter, vessels over 12cms are rare, and none exceed 14cms in diameter. Unworked

or raw lumps of anhydrite were obviously easily available as there is ample evidence for its utilisation at Siraf. The debris from the manufacturing process shows that blocks of stone were roughly shaped and trimmed, and then turned on a lathe in the same way that wooden bowls were, resulting in the distinctive waste left behind. Both the working debris and finished items show that virtually all vessels were turned on a lathe. There are very few instances of even partial hand-finishing and no apparently totally hand-carved vessels.

The basic repertoire of the stone-turners includes shallow dishes, straight-side or inturned rim containers, and lids; other forms, such as a pair of probable oil lamps, were represented by only one or two examples. The most common vessels are small containers with straight or slightly flaring sides, and of these the nearly straight-sided version is the dominant shape. Nearly all of the small containers have some form of lathe-turned decoration, either raised cordons or ridges or fine-cut grooves, and completely plain vessels are rare. Apart from lathe-turned grooves decoration mostly took the form of small incised motifs or rocker-arm patterns. Incised motifs were sometimes cut through a layer of dark pigment applied in selected bands to the surface. These bands now appear either dark grey or purple.



Although anhydrite vessels were contemporary with some of the later types of imported decorated soap stone bowls the styles of decoration seen on these rarely seems to have been copied by the local craftsmen. For instance, ring-and-dot decoration was very rarely used, but this had largely stopped being used on soapstone vessels by the time anhydrite vessels were common. Two extremely similar lids or covers are the only two examples with this style of decoration, but these are also an unusual form within the repertoire.

The main period of utilisation and production of local anhydrite vessels was from the 9th century onwards, for perhaps a couple of hundred years. No actual workshops were found and most of the redeposited waste or debris came from leveling contexts. It was a common find in the make-up deposits of the housing complex at Site F which dates from the mid-9th century to the late 10th century.

Soap stone or steatite.

Unlike the anhydrite vessels mentioned above soap stone vessels were all imported in a finished state. Virtually all these vessels were made from a fine grain, pale grey steatite which sometimes had a crystalline appearance. They seem to predate those smaller, locally-made anhydrite vessels and were certainly

available from the 8th century onwards. The precise source for the soap stone is unknown but two possibilities exist, either Northern Iran or Yemen, and the latter is probably more likely as it would have been easier to transport these heavy and fairly fragile objects by sea rather than overland. Three main types of vessels were imported into Siraf - tub-shaped vessels used for cooking, decorated bowls, and 'incense burners'. Other, less common, forms include lids or platters, triangular lamps, and one multi-wick lamp.

The earliest of the decorated bowls date to the early part of this period, the 8th century, and many came from the infill of the Great Mosque platform at Site B, with only a few examples from 9th century deposits. Typically these bowls have vertical sides and decoration over all of the outer surface of the walls, mostly comprising schemes made from a mixture of compass-drawn semi-circles or arcs and double ring-and-dot motifs. Rim diameters range between 9 and 21cms with most being between 18 to 20cms. Some of these decorative schemes are quite elaborate and although several are similar, none is identical. It is likely that these decorative items were widely traded as one similar to those at Siraf was found at Qasr al-Hayr East, Syria (Grabar ,*et al.* 1978). Slightly later than the ring-and-dot style are bowls with small narrow lugs and zones of incised lines.



Although a very few were found in 8th century deposits this was predominantly a 9th to 10th century style of decoration.

A few bowls and most of the lids have more deeply 'carved' decoration which results in a three dimensional effect. Chip-carved soap stone vessels are 9th century or later in date and none was found in the pre-803 AD deposits. Deep-carved repeating running scroll and pierced decoration is nearly always found as bands around the edges of flat vessels. Whether these are lids or platters is debateable, although some are small most have large diameters – around 20 to 24cms – but they do have a stepped lid-seating on the underside and the size would fit some of the bowls. However, this style of decoration has not been found on any of the bowls. The so-called incense burners all have the same basic form – a more-or-less square body with a leg on each corner which projects below the base, and a thick heavy straight handle projecting from the middle of one side. There are three basic forms – round section legs and a projecting side curve; trefoil legs with three flat-sided projections; square legs and flat projections on the sides. The inside of the first form is plain and circular, but the latter two forms have eight lobe interiors. Precisely what these were used for is unclear, but they were the second most common form of soap stone vessel after plain cooking vessels found on the site and many were mended

as the heavy handle obviously had a tendency to break away from the far thinner body. Occasionally these broken handles were subsequently reworked to make gaming pieces, possibly chessmen.

The cooking pots are plain, with rough vertical tooling on the exterior and smooth interiors, and most seem to have a pair of projecting horizontal flange handles, usually lower down the wall, fairly near the base, but occasionally near the rim. Rim diameters range between 15 and 28cms, with most being between 22 and 25cms; they vary between 10 and 21cms high with an average height of 12 to 14cms. Many had been extensively used over a long time as the degree of sooting on the exterior attests, and occasionally they had been so burnt that it affected the stone. These were obviously prized items as many had been mended with iron rivets or staples. In at least two instances cooking-vessels were mended on more than one occasion as they have both iron and copper alloy rivets. This degree of mending to extend their useful life suggests that these items were either expensive, or not easy to replace, and they were far more frequently repaired than the decorate bowls.

A very few vessels made from a different type of soap stone were found. This is darker in colour, with a finer grain and feels

heavier. These vessels obviously came from a different source and do not seem to have been part of the same regular trade.

One distinctive, but small, group of luxury imported finished stone vessels were made from talc stone and both white and black examples were recovered from deposits dated from the mid-9th to early 11th century. These included a probably pen tray with a reservoir for ink, a bottle, and a possible stand with square sides and large open circular inside, and were all single examples of their type. Two identical small containers with rilled sides of a similar size to those locally made in anhydrite, and a couple of lids, and the only forms represented by more than one example. Where these were made is uncertain, but there are sources of talc stone in both Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Other stone items include net weights and smoothing stones which usually utilised natural pebbles of various sizes; apart from the soap stone and anhydrite vessels additional domestic stone objects were pestles and mortars and some whetstones. Nearly all the mortars were made from pale yellow sandstone, tapering towards the base and a pair of lug handles at the rim. A common feature of the many mortars recovered, either complete or as fragments, was that they were intentionally discarded as they were worn-out through extensive use with the base missing.

Glass

Glass was a very common find at Siraf at all periods, but particularly in the 8th to 11th centuries, indicating it was a common component of all households supplying most of the vessels for drinking in the form of small bowls or cups, dishes and bowls, jars of various sizes, jugs and ewers, small bottles or phials for liquids used in limited quantities, as well as much larger containers. Forms not associated with food or cosmetic use include lamps, inkwells, bleeding-cups, and small 'receivers' with one flattened side which were always made from dark blue glass. There were three forms of lamps, larger single lamps with several handles on the body - commonly called mosque lamps; small lamps with projecting stem bases of the type usually used in groups in polycandela; and lamps with wick holders, the only type of glass lamp that could have been used on a flat surface rather than suspended from a fitting. The small lamps used in groups, with rim diameters around 6-7cms and 7-10cms high, were the most numerous of the three types, but they were also the easiest to identify from small pieces which might well bias the percentages.

As the glass was mostly in a very fragmentary state it is inevitable that smaller vessels are probably over represented in the range of forms from the site as they are easier to reconstruct,



and some were even found complete. Most of these were small bottles or jars and a few were tiny, only 1.5cms in height. They ranged from plain, simple cylindrical phials to small bottles with marvered looped trails in contrasting colours, and some with elaborate cut decoration. Bowls for various sizes were common, ranging in size with the largest about 34cms in diameter, but these were the only form which was hardly ever decorated. Both shallow bowls with flaring sides and deeper, straight-sided bowls frequently had folded-over rims.

A city of the size of Siraf would have had its own glass blowing industry and it seems likely from the manufacturing debris found at the pottery manufacturing centre at Site D that glass vessels might also have been made there. A couple of reconstructable items show that the ubiquitous small bowls, probably used as drinking cups, were the most likely products to have been made there. They are the most common glass vessel form found on the site for several centuries, and these shallow glass bowls with near vertical sides, although similar in both size and basic shape (most have diameters between 8 and 10cms), have endless minor variety in their rim forms and so individual examples are difficult to date closely. The evidence from Site D suggests that most of the vessels found, and possibly made there, were plain and fairly simple in form with

external folded rims. A few pieces with shallow cut decoration were also found at Site D, but it is unclear if these represent cullet collected for recycling or could have been manufactured locally. The plain everyday vessels were mainly made from 'natural' coloured glass in a range of greenish colours deriving from impurities in the raw ingredients, and it is likely that the high quality vessels, usually made from good quality colourless glass, were imported rather than being made locally. Deliberately coloured glass was rare, with dark cobalt blue being the most common, followed by emerald green. A few pieces had distinct opaque red swirls from the copper colourant, but no complete vessels were found suggesting this was an accidental product of changing furnace conditions.

Most of the decorated vessels were either blown into a same-size mould, or had either deep facet cut or shallower cut linear designs. There was only a single piece of Islamic mosaic glass, from Site H, and two small pieces from shallow bowls with engraved line decoration. Decoration using trails or other applied features in a contrasting colour was not very common, neither was optic blowing. Amongst the deep facet-cut bottles are several examples of the well-known small molar flasks found on many sites of this period over a wide area, such as Fustat, Egypt (Scanlon and Pinder Wilson 2001), Beirut,



Lebanon (Jennings 1998/9) and Nishapur (Kröger 1995). Other examples of well-known types include bottles with wide flange rims and conical cut-decorated necks of a type found on the Sergei Limani wreck dated to c. AD 1025, or small bottles with cut arcades on the sides and faceted necks. Vessels with same size mould-blown decoration mainly comprised beakers or cups, bowls, and straight-sided bottles. Pattern designs included honey-comb decoration, repeating motifs, and Kufic inscriptions, but because of the way they these vessels were made they are much thinner than those with cut decoration and so are more fragmentary. It is likely that most of the vessels with more complex decoration were blown into two- or even three-part moulds, and many of these vessels also had decorated bases which often survive in a rather better state because of their thickness.

Another distinctive group of vessels, dating to the 8th century, is likely to have been imported and came from a restricted area of the infill of the platform of the Great Mosque at Site B. These were all made from dark blue glass and include wide bowls, bottles with thickened and flattened rims, jars with spiral trails around the neck, and the body of one phial. All the vessels of this group were well-made, with well-formed rims and the enclosed vessels often had modelled or tooled bases.

Worked bone, ivory and shell

Many small items were made from bone and ivory, including spindle whorls used for spinning thread, gaming pieces, inlays, and dolls. Different types of shell were also utilised, as was coral, but the evidence for the use of shell mostly comes from the working residue in the form of shells abandoned part-way through their use.

Highly decorated whorls with flat tops and convex bottoms were a common find made from both ivory and bone. It has been suggested that these small decorative items were used as buttons, but a more likely use is that they were spindle whorls. They vary in diameter between 1.5 and 2.5cms in diameter with most centring around 2cms. The size of the central hole and the light weight of these whorls indicates that the spun thread was fairly fine. Both ivory and bone whorls have similar decoration comprising incised lines, mostly in the form of concentric circles around the whorl, and ring-and-dot motifs. The ring-and-dot motifs were either spaced singly around the circumference, arranged in chevrons or lines, and occasionally grouped to depict simple birds. Only four of the whorls have an additional motif, a stylised fern or tree. Examples with just line decoration were uncommon and completely plain whorls rare. There is no indication, however, that ivory was being worked at Siraf and it



seems probable that these items were imported as finished goods. Distaff spinning seems to have been a common occupation during all the period of occupation, and these spindle whorls, together with several groups of murex shells found in pits, attest to both spinning yarn and dyeing it. However, none of the finds can be directly linked to weaving.

Counters or gaming pieces were occasionally found - for such activities as board games, for example chequers or chess. Small circular containers, knife handles and a few pins all show that lathe-turning was also as a method for working bone and ivory and, like the spindle whorls, decoration was mostly limited to ring-and-dot and cut grooves. Only a couple of items had carved decoration – a rectangular plaque with a running animal and a small head. Traces of red paint survived in the ring-and-dot motifs on a probable knife handle showing that this type of decoration was further enhanced with the use of colour. Simple toys for children also utilised animal bones and sections of long bones either had faces painted on one end or were simply carved with indications for the eyes, nose and mouth. These would have had cloth tied around the lower part of the bone to make dolls. Other items include a single spoon with a small shallow bowl and the terminals of several unidentified objects.

Bone and ivory was also used to make inlays, mostly likely to have been set in wood and possibly either in boxes or furniture. These inlays were usually basically square and the most common form had a V-shaped notch cut in the centre of one side and a small central hole. Others had concentric circles set within the square frame and were similar to the gaming counters, but rather thinner. Working waste suggests that two different types of local shells also provided material for a similar function as several were found with cut diagonal flat faces that clearly show striations, indicating that they were sawn. These shells were all large with wall up to 6-8mm thick. A couple of the shells had several marks in a line down one side showing where the next cut would have been made to produce thin and flat sections of shell. Most of these partly worked shells came from the infill from the Great Mosque platform at Site B, but a couple were also associated with the buildings at Site F.

Surprisingly there is only limited evidence for mother-of-pearl being worked at Siraf and very few artefacts of this material were recovered. The species of oyster suitable for working mother-of-pearl is still found in the area today and is likely to have been readily available in the main Siraf period. Two flat finger rings with projects decorated with ring-and-dot motifs, a small plaque, and a few fragments with cut edges - which might



have been inlays - were the only items recovered. Rather more pieces of coral were found, including both red 'stick' coral and white coral, and most of these were pierced indicating their use as jewellery.

Beads and other items of jewellery

Many beads and a number of pendants made from various types of stone are another indicator of the wide variety of materials coming into Siraf as items of trade, but some attest to the existence of a parallel local industry producing companion items. Stone beads of a wide variety of shapes were fairly common throughout the whole period of Siraf and were made from lapis lazuli, onyx, chalcedony, rock crystal, banded agates, and carnelian. Raw carnelian was occasionally found on the beach by members of the team during the course of the excavation and it seems likely, therefore, that most of the numerous carnelian beads were probably locally made. Other material used for beads include of few complete shells, lignite or possibly ebony, and coral. Beads were also frequently made from glass, but small bone, shell and ivory beads were very rarely found, but some fish vertebra were utilised to make beads. Although imported turquoise items were found these were usually ring setting rather than beads. One particularly fine ring setting was made from banded agate and had an extremely fine

cut Kufic inscription cut through the thin lighter colour top layer in a cameo effect.

Ten seal beads were found and four of these came from Site O which yielded a relatively small finds assemblage. Two of these were virtually identical with a lion-like animal carved within a raised rectangular surround; both were made from an unusual dark plum-red stone. All the others were either made from carnelian or a type of onyx. Motifs included ibex, horse-like animals and stylised line figures.

Metal working

As well as the items of iron and copper alloy found at Siraf there is also evidence for working both iron and copper alloy from the various sites. A number of the distinctive bun-shaped pieces of waste iron which form in the base of iron smithing hearths and a crucible that was used for melting copper alloy were recovered. Although we know that the Sirafis must also have been working lead, in or near the area of the city, to produce the local lead coinage we found no evidence for this. Very little lead was found, mostly formless scraps of waste, and the only identifiable objects were two plumb bobs and a rim fragment with small stamped circles along the edge, which might be part of a vessel.



Iron objects did not survive particularly well because of proximity to the sea and the effects of salt in the soil on the metal. As usual, nails of various types and sizes were by far-and-away the most common find, but occasional small structural fittings and a few knives were found. The most significant iron object recovered was a largely intact brazier found in the Extension of the Great Mosque. Many of the nails were substantial, some with large domed heads and short shafts were used as door studs while others could only have been used on large timbers, and some were of the type still used in the construction of boats.

Copper alloy was used to make objects for a wide variety of uses, for personal items, fittings for either furniture or boxes in the form of hinges and straps, other objects include many small weights, a few spoons and one knife, small pans from balance scales, and bells of various sizes. Several of the bells were the very small size often attached to birds of prey used in falconry. Many of the items found were personal objects, such as both elaborately decorated and plain kohl sticks, small scoops and tweezers, or pieces of jewellery – large dress pins, finger rings, bracelets, pendants, and earrings; one of the finger rings had a turquoise setting but most were plain or with integral bezels. A number of the items found had been part of composite objects,

such as knife guards or bindings. The noticeable factor of nearly all the pieces or complete items of copper alloy found at Siraf is their small size, with very few pieces of any size. Only a few bits of larger items were found, most of which were probably parts of vessels, indicating that larger items that could not be mended and reused were regularly melted down and recycled.

Precious metals items were very rare finds, but this is not surprising in an urban situation where most such items would represent occasional casual losses. One such apparent casual loss was a pair of gold earrings each with a single pierced pearl. These were found looped together, a standard way to keep such small items together when not being worn, and could easily have fallen from a pocket. The other items were a bead and a finger ring with a setting for a bezel. Nearly all of the small number of silver items recovered were also finger rings, and a couple were small in size suggesting they belonged to children. Only one was made from a plain band, the others had setting for stones.



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Siraf and East Africa

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Abstract

When the great traveler and geographer, al-Masudi sailed to East Africa in AH 304 (916 CE), he did so on ship owned by a family of Siraf ship owners, living in the Mikan quarter of the city. He suggests that the voyage was common- place, although one of the most dangerous to be undertaken on the Indian Ocean. The most popular destination was the town of Qanbalu, where al-Masudi himself stayed and one of the few places with an Islamic population. He describes a complex society, supplying mostly ivory and some amber (or ambergris) into the Indian Ocean trading system.

Recent archaeological researches in East Africa have amplified our understanding of this trade. Coinciding with the revival of Siraf as an international trading center in the late 8th century CE, we can note a significant increase in Gulf- imports on East African sites; the likelihood that Siraf was one of the major partners can be suggested from the range of ceramics and glass that is found including commonly unglazed storage jars that were being manufactured at Siraf itself.

These connections continue into the 12th century CE, with remarkable concurrence in the assemblages on the African coast, with those found in the houses of the Sirafi merchants in Iran. We are also able, from recent excavations, to pinpoint the main areas of trade to the Lamu archipelago, northern Pemba (probably the island of Qanbalu) and Zanzibar. From these areas, long archaeological sequences have been obtained that show the massive scale of the international trade between the 8th and 12th century CE. The paper will focus on the results from excavations from shanga and Manda , Mkumbuu and Tumbe , and Unguja Ukuu , Kizimkazi and Tumbatu (where sirafi- style



kufic inscriptions have been found) The paper will argue that the relationship between Siraf and East Africa was much more fluid than a simple trade in raw materials from the African coast. The evidence suggests an active network that involved the substantial movement of people (such as craftsmen, religious leaders) not just merchants, and a close connection that spanned artistic, religious and architectural activities. This can be seen for example in mosques and tomb architecture, in stone inscriptions, and in surviving customs and ceremonies. African-Iranian relations, through the port of Siraf, were complex and sustained over many centuries, and are only now being understood through archaeological investigations in east Africa and the full publication of the Siraf excavations.

When the great traveller and geographer, al-Masudi sailed from East Africa to the Gulf in AH 304 (916 CE), he did so on a ship owned by a family of Sirafi shipowners, who were resident in the Mikan quarter of the city. He commented that the ‘people of Siraf’ make this voyage, and that this was his last voyage to East Africa of several during his career. He also commented that of all the voyages in the Indian Ocean, ‘I do not know of one more dangerous than that of the Zanj’ (Freeman-Grenville 1962, 14-16)

His destination was the island and town of Qanbalu. This place had a Muslim population and a royal family, although the rest of the East African coast was predominantly non-Muslim. His detailed ethnographic descriptions of the local inhabitants, the

record of Bantu words that were spoken suggests that he was an accurate and careful observer. He commented that the most common export was ivory, but also lists wild leopard skins, tortoise shell and ambergris (which seems to have been obtained from hunted whales). There is a brief notice of gold from southern Africa, but significantly not of slaves.

His account of the ivory trade is of particular interest. He describes local hunting methods, and how the tusks weigh fifty pounds or more. They usually go to Uman, and from there are 'sent to China and India'. He commented that Chinese required ivory palanquins, or litters, and in India for the handles of daggers and curved sword scabbards, as well as chessmen and gaming pieces. Ivory was also burnt in religious ceremonies. The scale of the ivory trade to India and China was such that 'if it were not so, ivory would be common in Muslim lands'.

Al-Masudi's account is a useful snapshot of relations between Siraf and East Africa at the beginning of the tenth century CE, but only provides one place name, that of Qanbalu, the location of which we will return to later. Other historical accounts fill in other details. For example Ibn Hawqal (c. 960 CE) states that the 'houses of Siraf are constructed in teak (*saj*) and other kinds of wood, which are imported from the land of the Zanj. This



passage has been much debated (Whitehouse 2001) but archaeological evidence suggests that mangrove poles were extensively used in tenth-century Sirafi houses, and these most likely came from East Africa, where the use of such poles are recorded from an early date (Horton 1996, 414). Another indicator of the closeness of the links between Siraf and East Africa comes from the tenth-century *Book of the Wonders of India* compiled by Buzurg ibn Shahriyar, and probably completed around 953 CE (Freeman-Grenville 1981) Buzurg was a sea-captain operating in the Indian Ocean, and collected most of his stories in the ports of Sohar and Siraf. The collection contains 136 stories of which 13 refer to East Africa. His narrative includes descriptions of a slaving expedition to East Africa, and the first detailed account of gold mining through adits into the hillside, in the land of Sofala in Southern Africa. His narrative is also important as it was the first to mention three additional place-names, as well as Qanbalu; Thabia, Ghailami Island and the Sea of Saifu.

East African Historical Sources

How was Siraf viewed from East Africa? Unfortunately early sources from the region do not survive, or were never written. There are however a series of local histories and chronicles from the 16th – 20th centuries, as well as a strong oral tradition, than

can still be recorded relate various historical events (Pouwells 1987, 2000). Of particular importance are those accounts that link the founding of towns in East Africa by seven brothers, or six sons and the ruler of Shiraz (Prins 1967, Spear 2000). While Siraf is not mentioned directly, the geographical proximity between Siraf and Shiraz indicates the importance of the connection with this area of Fars.

The oldest surviving chronicle, *The Chronicle of the Kings of Kilwa*, was recorded as a Portuguese preçis by Joao de Barros and published in *Da Asia* in 1552 (Freeman-Grenville 1962, 89). A longer version of another chronicle written in Arabic, containing similar material, is known as the *History of Kilwa* and survives in a 19th century manuscript (Freeman-Grenville 1962, 34-7). There is a third chronicle, written in ki-Swahili, that adds further details. All the versions provide a semi-mythical account of the founding of Kilwa, a town on the southern part of the East African coast, by merchant-princes from Shiraz. The Portuguese version relates how Ali, one of seven brothers, whose father was "Hocen" (Husain), and whose mother was an Abyssinian, embarked at Hormuz, and eventually arrived at Kilwa where he acquired the island from the local ruler in exchange for cloth. The Arabic version gives seven ships sailing from Shiraz, a sultan and his six sons. Each ship



stopped at different places and founded a town. Kilwa was established by Ali bin al-Husain, although his father, the ‘Sultan of Shiraz’ is remembered as Hasan bin-Ali. The local pagan ruler was named as Muli, and the new arrivals were met by a local Muslim, Muiri wa Bari. There was a mosque already on the island known as Kibala (i.e. a building with a Mihrab). Various dates are given for the settlement of Kilwa; the Chronicle gives around AH 400 (c. 1009 CE) while the History gives mid third century (c. 864 CE).

The Shirazi traditions are extremely widespread along the coast, not just in Kilwa, but in the region between Malindi and the Comoro islands. The list of ports given in the History of Kilwa is significant – they include Manda, Shanga, Yanbu (?), Mombasa, Pemba island, Kilwa and Anjouan – and run in a southerly direction. It is curious that the place of the supposed first landing in the Lamu archipelago, with the towns of Shanga and Manda, the Shirazi traditions are at their weakest. Non-Kilwa versions of the same myth provide quite different lists of towns, often with a more southerly focus as well as different names of the people involved.

There has been much debate about the historical significance of the Shirazi myth. At one level this is clearly a ‘foundation

myth', that reads in a very implausible way (Horton and Middleton 2000, Middleton 1992). The History of Kilwa gives the reason for the migration as a dream by the Sultan that he saw a rat with an iron snout gnawing the town walls of Shiraz, and predicted the ruin of the city. The account of the seizure of the island of Kilwa is full of structured principles and oppositions that can be read as a foundation charter to legitimize its control by a particular group. The last of consistency between names and places suggests that the myth was replayed in different towns and ruling dynasties. No trace of the migration, nor of the individuals can be found in the historiography of Shiraz itself.

Some archaeologists and historians have argued that behind the myth there was a genuine migration from Shiraz/Siraf, which is being remembered. The first modern interpretation suggested that Shirazi merchants settled the towns on the Benadir coast of southern Somalia, marrying into the local population, before moving down to the coast to Pemba, Zanzibar, Kilwa and the Comoro islands (Chittick 1965, 1977). The most ardent advocate of the Shirazi migration theory was Neville Chittick (1984), who in his excavations at Manda (the first 'town' in the list to be settled) found an extensive 9th-15th century trading port, including ceramics that were essentially similar to those excavated by Whitehouse at Siraf. In particular, quantities of



earthenware storage jars made in the kilns in the industrial quarter of Siraf formed a significant part of the total assemblage. He argued that merchants from Siraf established a colony at Manda in the ninth century. Some centuries later, and having taken local African wives, the descendants of these Sirafi/Shirazi merchants moved south. In his excavations at Kilwa, Chittick (1974, Horton et al, 1986) found copper and silver coins, with a series starting with coins of Ali bin al-Hasan, which he dates to c. 1200 CE (but which I have redated to c. 1000 CE) and identified with the founder of the Shirazi dynasty, which we have seen as actually Ali bin al-Husain. The historical date was seen as the start of a very long historical process, ending in the early 7th/13th century.

Few working in East Africa now accept this literal interpretation of the historical texts (Nurse and Spear 1985). The archaeological evidence suggests that the ports of the coast have their origins in the Iron Age communities of East Africa (Chami 1994). Careful studies of the ceramic sequences that have been excavated show a long development of occupation starting at least in the 5th century CE, and continuing until the present day. No evidence for actual colonies of Persian (or indeed Arab) merchants can be deduced from the archaeological evidence. This is also confirmed by modern historical linguistics that has

found very few Arabic and virtually no Persian loan words in reconstructions of early Swahili language (Nurse and Hinnebusch 1993). A modern reading of the Shirazi traditions is that they were formed as part of the conversion of the coastal communities of east Africa to Islam during the 10th-12th centuries CE and echo the commercial and religious links between Fars and the East African coast. They provide some valid dynastic information at local rulers, but are not a literal narrative of historical events, but myths or foundation charters for the southern Swahili settlements.

Archaeological Evidence

Recent archaeological researches in East Africa have amplified our understanding of these connections, the religious changes were happening at the time, and the social context of local distance Indian Ocean trade.

Two major excavations have taken place in the Lamu archipelago, at the sites of Manda (Chittick 1984) and Shanga (Horton 1996). At present both sites date from the mid 8th century, although some radiocarbon dates from Manda might point to earlier occupation. The two sites lie less than 15 miles apart, and represent two competing ports on separate islands in the archipelago. Manda is the larger of the two sites (possibly



covering about 10 ha) in its early phases, with more substantial architecture, including stone sea walls, coral and brick-built buildings, might be residential or ceremonial in function. Manda is also richer in its imports of ceramics and glass, although this may be because the beach and trading areas were excavated (Horton 1984, 1986). Both sites have a strong focus in their imported pottery towards the Gulf, and in particular the ceramic assemblages from Siraf. While much is of types that have a general circulation (such as Sasanian-Islamic jars, white glazed wares and colour-splashed wares, and lustre wares) other types have a close Siraf connection. These include lead splashed wares and lead glazed polychromes, the so called 'early sgraffiato pottery', but also the unglazed storage jars. Three of the five main types of jar found can be directly attributed to the Siraf kilns (Horton 1996, 297), the most common being the pale green earthenware. These wares represented 25-30% of the imported pottery totals between the 8th and the late 10th century, when the import of this pottery ceased overnight. The impact of the earthquake at Siraf in 977 may have been the cause for this collapse in this trade – or at least the production of these storage jars.

Another connection is suggested in the Chinese ceramics found in the Lamu archipelago. While numerically rarer in East Africa

than in Siraf, nonetheless all the main types are found – Changsha painted stoneware, Olive green glazed ('Dusun') jars, Yue greenwares and Ding wares. These small pieces of Chinese pottery occur at around 5% of the total imported assemblage in these early levels, a rather higher proportion than at Siraf itself. Siraf was probably the main centre for the import of Chinese pottery in the ninth century, and it is remarkable that so many pieces find their way to East Africa.

We have no information about the religion of the inhabitants of Manda, but at Shanga Muslims were certainly present. Directly evidence for this comes from a series of mosques that were excavated below the Friday Mosque, constructed about 1000 CE. The first seven mosques were constructed entirely of timber, and spanned the late 8th-early 10th century CE. They were rectangular in plan, and a particular feature was the inclusion of a southern room beyond the prayer hall, which acted as outer room, through which the prayer hall was entered. The capacity of these timber mosques was limited to around 25 worshippers, and each mosque had a life of around 30 years, before it was replaced. The first stone mosque, dating to early 10th century, retained the same basic plan, with its southern room. The prayer hall changed its shape to being square, and this may reflect Gulf, and specifically Siraf influence where the



smaller mosque have similar square prayer halls, as well as annexes. Another link is the use of the staircase minaret, also found in Shanga example as well as at Siraf. When the 10th century stone mosque at Shanga was replaced in the early 11th century, the prayer hall reverted to being rectangular in shape.

An important issue is who were these Shanga Muslims. Various theories have been postulated – the mosques were for example for visiting merchants, and not the local inhabitants. However I am convinced that they were local converts to Islam, and the main evidence comes from a series of miniscule silver coins (Brown 1992, 1993, 1996). These were locally minted, and give the name of two local rulers Muhammed and Abdullah, dating to the 9th century. They have Islamic styling, although not part of an official issue of the Caliphate, and point at least to a Muslim royal family in the archipelago. The coins are themselves simple, tiny in weight (less than 0.1g) and contain very little information, and point to a production using dirhams as the silver source. The mosques have a capacity of about 25, that may well have been adequate for a small settlement of about 250 people.

The sites in the Lamu archipelago fit closely the description of Qanbalu, provided by al-Masudi. Here there are two sites with

very close trading links with the Gulf, and specifically Siraf, as well as direct evidence for an elite Muslim population living at Shanga at the time of his visit. He even tells of a historical tradition, that places the establishment of Qanbalu, around the time of the changeover between the Umayyads and the Abbasids, that is c. 750 CE, precisely when Shanga at least is founded on archaeological evidence.

Needless to say, there has been considerable debate on the location of Qanbalu, and if al-Masudi is correct, the main port for trade with Siraf and the Gulf in general during the 9th -10th centuries CE. Al-Jahiz, writing in the mid 9th century CE, identified the town as the main centre of the trade in Zanj slaves, that were used to drain the swamps of the Shatt al-Arab, and were involved in the notorious Zanj revolt ((869-883 CE). It is likely that the export of Zanj slaves collapsed in the aftermath of the revolt, and this may explain al-Mas'udi's silence on the trade.

The favoured location for Qanbalu has for many years been the island of Pemba (Chittick 1977). Again recent excavations are now throwing considerable new light on this central part of the East African coast and in particular the two islands of Zanzibar and Pemba. This particular pairing seems to be what al-Jahiz is



referring to, when he notes the two islands of Qanbalu and Lanjuya, the latter clearly being Unguja, the historic name of Zanzibar island. The main port is probably the site of Unguja Ukuu, which has recently been excavated and published (Juma 2004), and which contains similar assemblages to Manda and Shanga. Although the proportion of Siraf jars is a little lower than in the northern ports, it is rich in Sasanian-Islamic pottery, and Chinese imports. As with Manda, it is the quantities of imported ceramic that impresses, and show the scale of commercial connection with the Gulf in the 9th-10th centuries. Unlike Shanga and Manda, Unguja Ukuu is abandoned in the 10th century, and one wonders whether its failure was linked to the ending of the Zanj slave trade. The settlement may have moved to Kizimkazi, where there is a famous early mosque with the elaborate Kufic inscription and mihrab, dated AH 500 /1107 CE, that uses local coral, but is clearly in the same style as the Kufic school of carving based in Siraf. Recently, a second mihrab, with similar Kufic has been excavated on the island of Tumbatu, off the north coast of Zanzibar (Horton forthcoming).

The Qanbalu identification with Pemba is indicated by the name is given to a settlement on the island at Yakut in the 13th century CE, which can be identified with the archaeological site of Ras Mkumbuu, a name phonetically related to Qanbalu. He also

mentions another town on the island, that can be identified as the site of Mtambwe Mkuu.

Archaeological evidence however does not support the direct identification of either Ras Mkumbuu or Mtambwe Mkuu as Qanbalu. Mkumbuu has an 10th century timber mosque, and a large Muslim population by the 11th century, but not convincing evidence for settlement before 950 CE, and it is probably the inhabitants moved there from somewhere else, possibly bringing their place name with them. Mtambwe Mkuu is another important 11th century site, and excavations have located a series of pits containing good assemblages of mid 10th century material, but nothing earlier. However an ongoing project in Northern Pemba, directed by Jeff Fleisher and Adria LaViolette (1997) has located the site of Tumbe / Chwaka, close to an excellent harbour that faces northwards into the Indian Ocean. Fleisher's survey (2002) has suggested that northern Pemba was heavily settled in the 8th-10th centuries, and that Tumbe itself covered some 30 ha, the largest known early site in East Africa. Huge quantities of local pottery and daub have been found here, as well as post hole buildings. The site begins in the 8th century, but seems to shift to nearby Chwaka in the early 11th century when the settlement surrounds a small stone mosque.



Tumbe might be the town of Qanbalu, and the excavations have not yet been completed, let alone fully analysed. However, preliminary indicators are that it is simply not 'rich' enough to fit the descriptions of already known major trading sites, such as Shanga, Manda and Unguja Ukuu. Imports are around 1-2% (as opposed to 5% at Shanga, and possibly higher at Manda), while the range of finds is much more limited. No Chinese imports have yet been found. The very many bead grinders, which employ discarded sherds, are all made from local ceramics, whereas at Shanga and Manda the much harder Sirafi jars are the preferred material. Tumbe looks like a large agricultural and manufacturing settlement, in contact with the Indian Ocean trading networks, but not the main port of trade.

Siraf and East Africa

Why was East Africa so important to the Sirafi merchants? As we have seen, there was a close and sustained link in the 9th and 10th centuries, and they were prepared to trade items such as their valuable Chinese pottery for the African commodities. Clearly there were materials such as timber that were important, because they were scarce in the Gulf. Slaves seem also to have been important, although the Sirafi merchants do not seem to have been so involved in the Zanj slave trade. The trade in such

bulky commodities seems to indicate the voyage was less dangerous and more routine than the historical sources suggest.

However, it is also clear that East Africa was able to supply a range of high value, low bulk precious commodities that were not available elsewhere. These include ivory, tortoise shell, wild animal skins and ambergris. Gold, iron and copper may also have been important exports by the end of the 10th century. Although there is no direct evidence that rock crystal was exported to the Gulf (by the 10th century it was certainly being sent however to Egypt), this may also have been important item. These precious commodities made a major contribution to the artistic cultures of the Abbasid caliphate.

However, it is also interesting to note that many of these precious items did not remain in the Middle East. They were important trade goods in their own right, to obtain other materials from far-flung areas. Al-Masudi makes this clear in his description of the ivory trade; relatively little remained behind - most was traded onto India and China. Perhaps this is the key to understanding the importance of East Africa to the Sirafi merchants - that they had supplies of ivory and other precious and exotic African commodities with which to obtain the famous Chinese ceramics, silks and lacquerwoods. Control over



the supply of the African items enabled them to enjoy for a period a significant competitive advantage over merchants from other regions, and this, together with their incredible nautical prowess, was the key to the very long distance trading expeditions for which they were most famous.

While Siraf continued to exist as a port in the 11th and 12th centuries, the archaeological evidence from East Africa indicates that other merchants were now in open competition for these precious commodities. These included Fatimid-controlled trade with southern Arabia and the Red Sea, Indian merchants and craftsmen, mostly from north west India, and south India and possibly even Indonesians operating a southern route via Madagascar. At the same time, the emergence of the key Port-cities at the mouth of the Gulf - Hormouz and Kish – were able to integrate the African trade more directly into the routes between India, Southern Arabia and the Red Sea. East African exotic commodities continued to be in high demand and new trade alliances were formed that ensured the continued prosperity of the ports involved.

However, in this reconstruction, the “Siraf” period of intense contact with East Africa lasted less than 200 years, between c. 800-1000 CE. The Shirazi traditions must have originated

during this period, closely coinciding with the flourishing of Buyid Shiraz, 965-1055 CE, with which they seem to have been modelled on. It is a testimony to the depth and importance of the trade between the two regions, that such traditions are still recalled and retold a thousand years later.

The relationship between Siraf and East Africa was much more fluid than a simple trade in raw materials from the African coast. The evidence suggests an active network that involved the substantial movement of people (such as craftsmen, religious leaders) not just merchants, and a close connection that spanned artistic, religious and architectural activities. This can be seen for example in mosques and tomb architecture, in stone inscriptions, and in surviving customs and ceremonies. African – Iranian relations, through the port of Siraf, were complex and sustained over many centuries, and are only now being understood through archaeological investigations in East Africa and the full publication of the Siraf excavations.

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Archaeological Surveys in the Highlands behind Siraf

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of reconnaissances taken during the Siraf excavations into the highlands behind the port. The purpose was to investigate the settlements which supported Siraf and the routes which connected the port to the great cities of Firuzabad and Shiraz. The routes were clearly marked with cisterns, stations and caravanserais, and even sections of paved roadway. Within the valley of Jam were architectural remains of Sirafi residences and evidence of glass production. The valleys of Galehdar and Dezgah were investigated for comparison. These archaeological remains testify to the complex social and economic system which supported this great port of the Persian Gulf.

In March 1973, the Iranian Center for Archaeological Research and the Siraf Expedition undertook a joint survey of the high valleys behind Siraf.¹ The survey consisted of three trips (Fig. 1): (1) to the Jam valley, especially the eastern portion, and the routes linking this valley with Siraf; (2) to Galehdar, concentrating on the western end of this long valley; (3) further

¹ This report is a summary of a chapter to be published in volume one of the final Siraf publications and was written in 1980. The author is indebted to David Whitehouse for his support of this research. The reconnaissance to Jam was undertaken with Jahangir Yasi, representing the Research Center of Archaeology and Art History of Iran, and has profited from his detailed report of our discoveries.

examination of the Jam valley and the routes to the west and north as far as the valley of Dezhgah.

The primary purpose of the survey was to ascertain the nature and extent of Sirafi settlement (9th - 11th centuries) near Jam in order to examine, through archaeological evidence, the assertions of medieval geographers that a close economic interdependence existed between the port and the highland valley (Istakhri, 128; Muqaddasi, 423). The Mountain of Jam, as it was known, was the final station on the caravan route from Shiraz and Firuzabad to Siraf. Jam was also a source of food, fruit and water for the port. The investigation of the archaeological remains in the Jam valley was expected, therefore, to provide an important regional amplification for the results of the excavations at Siraf. The survey of the valley of Galehdar, comparatively larger and more fertile for grain crops, provided a context for the evaluation of the Jam materials and greatly increased our understanding of the later history of Siraf (13th - 15th centuries), when this valley became an important cultural center (Aubin 1969).

Special attention was paid during the reconnaissance to the mapping of the ancient trade routes in the region, extending the surveys of Vanden Berghe, who worked southwards from



Firuzabad (1961, 165-75; cf. regional surveys by Gaube, 1973, 1979). Despite the difficulties inherent in tracing the ancient routes, numerous cisterns, rest houses and caravanserais were located and described and sections of paved road were identified. The remains of buildings constructed in the Sirafi style were discovered along the entire route between Siraf and Jam and between Siraf and Galehdar. Additional exploration in the western extension of the Jam valley and into the valley of Dezhgah followed the most likely route further inland though the identification with the period of Sirafi domination is less dramatic.

The exploration of the archaeological remains of these three valleys and the routes connecting them recalled the words of Sir Arnold Wilson, who passed through this region in 1911:

"Each valley was a social unit with its own leaders and headmen, its own reserves of grain and its own ancient traditions. Civilization here is of extreme antiquity. Almost every valley has its mounds, probably older than Babylon, its own pre-Islamic rock tombs and inscriptions and its own bit of paved roads, inherited probably from Sassanian times (Wilson 1942, 184).

While the ruins encountered rarely measured up to this romantic account, the varied and extensive archaeological remains raise intriguing questions on the patterns of social organization and economic history for this relatively remote region of southern Iran. Description of the archaeological evidence collected in these brief reconnaissance trips suggests both the achievements and the complexity of ancient and medieval southern Iran. The archaeological remains of the region behind Siraf may be outlined in the following cultural features:

A. Trade routes.

According to the present-day donkey drivers, the optimal route for transporting goods, especially in summer, should have a watering place every farsakh, i.e., after each hour of traveling time. While neither men nor animals need water this frequently, such a system is necessary for supporting large caravans of 50 to 200 animals. The cistern is thus a key feature along any well-traveled route. A tentative typology of cisterns according to form may be suggested. The routes between Taheri and Jam and Galehdar have cisterns exclusively of the form with parallel sides, rounded ends, generally 4 x 14 - 20m in size. The depth below surface was probably at least 3m. Many retain springing of vaults and probably all were intended to carry a vaulted roof over the entire length, as in the best preserved example, Sar



Gachinu (G2). At Maku, the virtues of this type of cistern were demonstrated by the availability of sweet, cold, fresh water. This form of cistern was already current in Sirafi times, the most probable period of extensive utilization and structural development along these routes.

A second type of cistern is the round basin, possibly not roofed, and always associated with mills, as at Mir Mo'ama (J19) and Berkeh Tul-e Qaleh (J28). Both of these examples have semi-circular buttresses, as do a few of the long type. This style of buttresses occurs at Siraf and is commonly found on buildings along the routes and in the valleys of Jam and Galehdar; it never occurs north of the Jam valley, suggesting that this was the limit of the influence of Sirafi masons or their building programs. The semi-circular buttress is provisionally taken as a diagnostic of Sirafi period architecture. Two further types of cisterns, the oval and large square forms, both seem to be associated with somewhat later architectural complexes. All the cisterns are made of rubble and saruj.

The cisterns along the routes rarely stand alone but are associated with various types of subsidiary buildings. The simplest and most common are one- and two-room buildings, generally 4 x 10m or 9 x 10m. All of these structures were

made of gatch and rubble and had vaulted roofs. Those examples with vaulting still extant show a semi-circular arch in section rather than a pointed vault. One end of these buildings appears to have been left open, so in fact they were small iwans; many open to the south, although the orientation is far from consistent. A second and rarer type of building is a tripartite structure (called talar-o tarhaneh), with three parallel iwans or a central iwan opening onto two flanking rooms.

More complicated structures have been described here as caravanserais. These fall into two broad categories: the courtyard type, with vaulted rooms along three or four walls (five examples found); and an iwan type, with a series of vaulted rooms opening toward one direction (two examples). The majority of these larger buildings were found on the Galehdar route; this route also has structures with both semi-circular and square buttresses (the later form of buttress is also found at Siraf). Together these indications suggest a different usage for the Galehdar route and over a longer period of time. The normal distance between centers of population is one day of traveling over these mountains; in other words, there is no valley more than a day's journey from the next valley. All the caravanserais are placed either at half-way points or within one farsakh of the destinations. They would have afforded only temporary shelter



for small groups of individuals rather than large caravans and presumably were used by late starters unable to arrive in the next valley by sunset.

B. The Jam valley.

The two major sites in the valley are Minareh (J1) and Bid-e Khar (J31), according to local tradition the ancient cities of Baharistan and Negaristan. Both have glass factories. At Tul-e Khan is a typical Sirafi building: a single long room, generally 4 x 16m, with semi-circular buttresses and entrances along one side.

In contrast to these open settlements are the high fortified hill tops with evidence of Sirafi period occupation. Each of these fortified centers have Sirafi irrigation works in the immediate vicinity. A third type of settlement is the open cluster of houses, made of dry stone or, more rarely, gatch and rubble; these appear to have been farming communities dating to a variety of periods including the Sirafi. This type of settlement is most common to the west of the Jam valley and to the north.

C. The Galehdar valley.

Only a very small portion of this large valley was investigated and no Sirafi buildings were found. The major site is the area of extensive ruins called Kuh-e Shekak (G7); a similar area is said

to exist farther down the valley to the east at Fal. The fortified hill tops appear to be non-Sirafi in date and are essentially places of refuge. The un-Sirafi character of the Galehdar valley is surprising, given the ruins along its route, and the possibility of a major Sirafi settlement farther down the valley (as suggested by Stein, 1937: 217 and 221) must not be discounted. In 1980 Heinz Gaube surveyed this part of the valley; he notes grave covers at Kabk-e Kuchik and describes pottery dating from the early Islamic through the Safavid period. Gaube went directly to Galehdar, where he found a cemetery and Imamzadeh with Safavid tomb covers and ceramics (probably Tomb-e Pir Mardi, G14 in our survey).

D. The Routes to the west and north of Jam and the valley of Dezhgah.

As mentioned above, there are no Sirafi remains along the routes farther inland, with the exception of the long round-ended cisterns. While the Riz valley may produce some Sirafi antiquities, its route to Jam is little used. The more usual and natural route connects this valley with Bandar Dayyer (west of Taheri). The general lack of sites along the northern route is more surprising and we have two possible explanations: either the present route differs substantially from the ancient one, or, more likely, the route beyond Jam was not under the jurisdiction



or at least the direct concern of the Sirafi merchants and was never developed to the same extent.

The valley of Dezhgah is a natural meeting for the routes going north. The settlement here is quite different in character due to the lack of stone and almost exclusive use of mud brick; the valley is also blessed with a river with sweet water flowing year round. The three corners of the valley were controlled by high square mounds (D1, D2, D5), each surrounded by a moat and a subsidiary settlement. Whether these mounds were functionally similar to those of the Jam valley must remain an open question; from a preliminary analysis of the ceramics, their period seems to be Sirafi or earlier. The low mounds of Sheikh abdullah (D4) and Dezhgah itself appear to be later.

Conclusions

For those familiar with the archaeological cultures of southern Iran, the results of the survey produced a very limited picture of human settlement in the highlands behind Siraf. Evidence of more remote prehistoric periods (at Tomb-i Tir and Tomb-e Pudu in the Galehdar valley) testifies to the pioneering discoveries of Stein; Tul-e Charmu and Dowlatabad may be added for prehistoric occupation in the valley of Dezhgah. Although the Jam valley produced no prehistoric pottery, lithic

evidence was abundant in several areas. Unfortunately, the caves investigated were either sterile or occupied during much later times.

It is a long chronological leap from prehistory to the other archaeological materials recovered during the survey: that of the Sasanian and Islamic periods. To be sure, further analysis of our collections and further survey work may reveal earlier historic occupations in this region. Nevertheless the abundance of archaeological sites datable to the millennium, c. 500 to 1500 A.D., poses an interesting historical and archaeological problem, the solution for which almost certainly lies in the port of Siraf. As a broad generalization, intensive permanent settlement in the southern folds of the mountainous region seems to have depended on an economic focus on the littoral of the Persian Gulf. The archaeological history of the hinterland reproduces the pattern revealed at Siraf itself. First is a probable Sasanian occupation, the archaeology of which is frustratingly nebulous (Whitehouse 1971; Whitehouse and Williamson 1973) and difficult to distinguish from a transitional Sasanian--early Islamic occupation (lasting until the end of the 8th century). The period of Siraf's mercantile greatness and economic predominance was from the early 9th through the 11th centuries, termed the early Islamic or, in this study, the Sirafi period.



Occupation continued at Siraf on a greatly reduced scale through the 15th century, a period designated middle Islamic here.

There remains to be considered, however, the question of the broader significance of the survey of the high valleys. The port of Siraf had special relationships with its regional settlements which enabled it to become an entrepot for long distance trade. A system of rural production centers contributed to support the port; these products included water, grain, fruits (citrus and dates), livestock (mountain herding) and manufactured goods, especially perfumes (and glass containers), textiles, etc. The climatic dichotomy between the torrid port and the more temperate interior also suggest that an important function of the mountainous region was to serve as an escape mechanism during the humid summer season, both for health reasons and, to the extent that the mercantile population was Iranian, as a socio-psychological identification with highland culture and geography.

The highland settlements reflect commercial transit support mechanism (e.g., road maintenance and security, organization and feeding of transport animals and their human agents), agricultural with light manufacturing communities, and seasonal residential facilities. Within each valley, the settlements formed

important transport support centers, linking Siraf with the interior. The valley of Jam assumed a primacy in this role while Siraf was the predominant entrepot in the Persian Gulf, from the 9th through the 11th centuries. Production and residential functions were important secondary considerations. The valley of Galehdar in contrast seems more strongly oriented toward these latter functions during the later centuries (13th through 15th centuries). While Galehdar remains linked with a smaller, less important Siraf by a well-developed caravan route, the center of cultural connection for Galehdar is with Fal (Khunj-o-Fal) farther east. Aubin (1969: 24-25) has shown that the history of Fal is that of a regional center of religion and learning, an "urban" settlement complex within the mountains of southern Fars closely associated with Shiraz, the capital, and with commercial linkages with Siraf and other ports as secondary functions.

Archaeological and geographical research in the island region behind Siraf needs more research in conjunction with the port. The survey described here presents an archaeological context for Siraf and demonstrates that understanding of the economic and social organization of a complex system in the early Islamic period, one connecting Siraf with the great cities of Fars province, Firuzabad and Shiraz. The ruins of the Jam, Galehdar,

and Dezhgah valleys will greatly expand the significance of Siraf for the historical development of medieval southern Iran.

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Stucco reliefs of Scenes from the Shahnama in a fort at Bandar-e Taheri (Siraf)

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Abstract

One of the most distinctive features of the Iranian Gulf is the line of forts which extends along the coastline from Bushehr to Bandar Abbas. One of these forts built by the local Al-Nasouri sheikhs in the late 19th to early 20th century is located to the west of Bandar-e Taheri near the site of the medieval port of Siraf. The fort was well-constructed with massive brick walls and towers enclosing courtyards for public and private use. The most remarkable feature of the fort is a balcony decorated with eighteen scenes from the Shahnama in moulded and carved stucco. They represent events from the lives of the great heroes such as Rustam, scenes with rulers such as Anushiravan etc. They date from the early 20th century and were probably adapted and copied from the illustrations to lithographed texts of the Shahnama. As yet they are unique both as examples of pictorial interpretation of the Shahnama and of Qajar decoration.

I propose to present and discuss this group of Shahnama scenes. My lecture will be illustrated with 35 mm colour slides.

One of the most distinctive features of the Iranian Gulf is the line of forts which extends along the coast from Bushehr to Bandar Abbas. One of these forts built by the local Al-Nasouri sheikhs in the late 19th to early 20th centuries is located to the west of Bandar-e Taheri near the site of the medieval port of



Siraf (1). Their descendants continued to use the fort as their residence until it was abandoned sometime during the 1980s (2). The fort was well-constructed with massive brick walls and towers enclosing courtyards for public and private use. The most remarkable feature of the fort is a balcony, located in the upper storey of the west side of the south courtyard, decorated with eighteen scenes from the **Shahnama** in moulded and carved stucco. As yet no known parallel with this extraordinary pictorial narrative has been identified in the remains of forts along either the Iranian or the Arab coasts of the Gulf.

The fort replaced an older structure which according to the supplement of the Persian Gulf Pilot, a navigational reference aid, of 1905 had been demolished. This suggests that the fort was probably built sometime after 1905 and at the latest by 1922 (3) The fort was certainly fully established by 1933 when Aurel Stein on archaeological survey work, camped in Taheri from 11 to 19 June “on an old-walled up terrace below the fortified mansion of Sheikh Hatim, the local chief” (4) His photograph of the fort corresponds exactly with the present building (5) Assuming that the **Shahnama** stucco reliefs are contemporary with the fort, they are remarkable examples of the survival of a traditional form of decoration and iconographical themes well into the 20th century. The balcony which they adorn, of a

simple rectangular plan, is entered through a door at the top of the stairs of the south-west corner of the fort, which leads into a long vestibule open on the east side overlooking the courtyard. The long west side is interrupted by five evenly spaced pairs of wooden doors each surmounted by a semicircular fan light of coloured glass within a wooden frame. On the east side four equally spaced full columns and two semi-engaged columns support five arches. The columns, all varied in form and shape are covered with moulded and carved stucco; the central pair are octagonal with vertical bands, while the outer and semi-engaged ones are circular with oblique fluted bands. All have elaborate **muqarnas** stalactite capitals which lead to the arches decorated on their inner surfaces with stucco panels of floral motifs and foliate tendrils. The stucco itself is formed from a fine-textured buff plaster applied over a mortar base covering the original brick and then moulded, carved and incised according to the requirements of the design. The most intricate work, however, is reserved for the inner walls of the balcony where a carefully articulated scheme of rich foliage ornament frames the **Shahnama** panels. Common to all three sides is a deep cornice of repeated pairs of winged flying figures holding bouquets of flowers above a continuous garland of swagged and beribboned roses carved in prominent relief. Below the cornice foliage is trained into bouquets and sprays of carnations and poppies with

birds perched among them, to fill the spandrels and borders around the panels. Here the stucco has been worked in a combination of moulding and carving on various levels to create a rich naturalistic effect emphasised by incised detail on petals and leaves. There is also a dado of approximately one third of each wall's height covered with stucco lightly carved into a pattern simulating either neat courses of brickwork or a crazy paving of interlocking triangles. There are no traces of colour on the stucco which relies for effect on the contrast between light and shade through different levels of relief (6).

The eighteen narrative panels are aligned in vertical pairs within the decorative frame:-

1. 1-2 and 3-4 on each side of the door of the south wall
2. 5-6,7-8,9-10,11-12 flank the three central doors of the west wall
3. 13-14,15-16,17-18 are along the north wall

Each panel has a simple shape; a rectangular (2,4,14,16,18), semicircular (1,3,13,15,17) or a vertical cartouche (5-12) all within a coiled or ribbed moulded border. All of the scenes are identifiable with either episodes, principal characters and associates of the **Shahnama** :-

1. Rustam killing Esfandiyar

Rustam shoots arrows into the eyes of Prince Esfandiyar, son of Shah Goshtasp, a legendary king of Iran.

2. The death of Rustam

Shahgad, Rustam's treacherous half-brother. lures Rustam into a trap lined with knives and swords. Before dying Rustam kills Shagad by shooting an arrow into his heart.

3. Sohrab seeks the identity of Rustam

Sohrab, Rustam's son, leads the Turanian army against the Iranians. He asks an Iranian soldier the names of his leaders in order to identify Rustam.

4. Rustam killing Sohrab

Rustam has defeated Sohrab in single combat, each unaware of the other's identity. Rustam recognizes his dying son too late from an amulet inscribed with his name.

5. Rustam rescuing Bizhan from the pit

The Iranian Bizhan has fallen in love with Manizha, daughter of the Turanian king Afrasiyab. As punishment he is thrown into a pit. Rustam here pulls him up with a rope.



6. Rustam kicking the rock

Bahman, the son of Esfandiyar, discovers Rustam feasting and drinking. He tries to kill Rustam by rolling a rock down on him. Rustam simply kicks it away, proof of his enormous strength.

7. Key Khosrau enthroned

Key Khosrau was the son of the Iranian prince Siyavosh and the Turanian princess Farangis. His reign was famous for justice and mercy.

8. Rustam and his father Zal

Rustam's ancestry is illustrious. Zal is ruler of the eastern province of Sistan and the son of the great warrior Sam. Rustam's mother, Rudaba, is the daughter of the ruler of Kabul.

9. Prince Siyavosh hunting

Prince Siyavosh goes to the court of Afrasiyab, ruler of the Turanians, and eventually marries his daughter Farangis. He displays his skill in both playing polo and hunting.

10. Giv and Gaudarz

Giv and Gaudarz, warriors at the courts of the rulers Key Kavus and Key Khosrau, are secondary but important characters who ensure that the main story continues.

11. Prince Siyavosh's ordeal by fire

Sudaba, stepmother of Siyavosh son of the Iranian ruler Key Kavus, falls in

Love with him. When accused Siyavosh and his horse emerge unharmed from fire thus proving his innocence.

12. Rustam killing the White Elephant

Zal's white elephant runs wild. Rustam kills it using the mace of his grandfather Sam.

13. Anushiravan enthroned

Anushiravan, like Key Khusrau, ruled justly and reformed Iran's tax system.

14. The Div Akhvan throwing Rustam into the Ocean

One of Rustam's seven heroic deeds. He tricks Akhvan into throwing him into the ocean rather than hurling him on to a mountain.

15. Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna (998-1030)enthroned

Sultan Mahmud ruled territories extending from Isfahan to Lahore. Firdausi, after 35 years of work, completed the **Shahnama** c.1010 A.D. and presented it to Mahmud in the hope of patronage.



16. The meeting of Ferdousi with Sultan Mahmud's court poets

This refers to an event recorded in the biography of Ferdousi compiled by Prince Baisunqur in the early 15th century. Ferdousi joins the three poets in a garden. They shun him until he completes a line of verse, which is inscribed on the plaque which he holds. They then welcome him and later introduce him to Sultan Mahmud.

17. Key Kavus and his grandson Key Khosrau seated

Key Khosrau was crowned as ruler of Iran during his grandfather's lifetime. Here they are shown as equal in status and the scene probably refers to their meeting to discuss the problem of their joint enemy Afrasiyab.

18. Rustam's combat with the White Div

This is the last of Rustam's seven heroic deeds. He rescues the ruler Key Kavus from the White Div who had kidnapped and blinded him.

All of the figures are conveniently identified by name and caption written in Persian in a squat **nastaliq** script within circular or square medallions placed above or beside them.

The scenes invite many lines of discussion concerning artistic technique and convention, identification and importance of scenes, source and date. All of the figures and inscriptions have been moulded in bold relief against a smooth plain ground. Bevelled edges, however, soften the abrupt transition between levels while details of calligraphy, features, textures and folds of clothing are worked in shallow relief and boldly incised strokes. This technique enables the characters to be depicted clearly and the space used to best advantage. A flat cartoon-like treatment has been chosen for the figures, with frontal poses and little regard for perspective and proportion in relation to the size of horses and elephants. Compositions are formal and static focused on the principal character with supporting figures grouped symmetrically around him. Available space is exploited by foreshortening animals or by depicting them in part only; thus in the scenes with Rustam and Sohrab (4) only the front halves of their horses are shown.

The scenery and action around the figures is streamlined and simplified; rocks and tents are treated as triangular peaks in outline and parallel strokes. Bizhan's and Rustam's pits are enclosed loops(2,5). Onlookers peer down at the main action from behind rocks (6) or from windows (11,12) sometimes with hands raised in the classic gesture of astonishment. There is

little attempt at individual treatment of features. All have long narrow eyes and prominent noses; seasoned warriors have handlebar moustaches (e.g. 1,4) young men may be cleanshaven (9.11), while clothing also aids identification – rulers and dignitaries wear crowns, turbans and long robes, warriors have armour of a type worn from the 17th to early 19th centuries and a range of helmets. Rustam is immediately identified by his long forked beard, his leopard cap, bow, quiver and bull-headed mace (e.g. 6,8,12). Skilful use of moulds to duplicate certain features is a time and effort-saving device. Here, for example, Rustam and Zal (8), Giv and Gaudarz (10) are seated in identical poses on identical chairs.

The presence of this remarkable stucco panorama of the **Shahnama** at such a late date in the Qajar period and in such an apparently unlikely place, is an impressive witness to the vitality of the great epic as a continuing pictorial source for a robust popular art. Although, however, the **Shahnama** mingles myth, romance, heroism and historical narratives of Iran's Sassanian kings in an inexhaustible choice of subject to artists and craftsmen, certain themes are repeated constantly because they have a strong narrative and emotional appeal, and can be depicted effectively in pictorial form. Rustam, the national hero, famous for his miraculous birth, his superhuman strength and

his endless battles on behalf of Iran is the most popular and celebrated hero. He is also a flawed tragic figure who abandons his wife Tahmina, kills his son Sohrab and stupidly falls into the trap set by Shahgad. The choice here apart from the two scenes of the presentation of Ferdousi's poem to Sultan Mahmud(15,16) is devoted to the **Shahnama** in a balance between action and repose. Eleven of the scenes depict **Shahnama** episodes (1-6, 11-12,14, 18) of which eight directly feature Rustam as the man of action (1-2,4-6,12,14,18) and three the young men Sohrab, Bizhan and Siyavosh (3,5,11). He is shown both in his great moments of courage and sacrifice – rescuing Bizhan (5) outwitting wild animals and demons (12,14) his victory over the White Div (18) and in his failures – the killing of Sohrab (4) falling into Shahgad's trap (2); even here he makes one last effort and summons up the strength to kill his betrayer. The action of these main scenes is tempered by the two prefaces and five more tranquil scenes which although they feature important mythical and historical characters, such as Anushiravan and Key Khosrau - enthroned and seated do not stress any specific event (7-10,13,17). Within this sequence of alternation of action and repose the placement of each scene does not follow the order of the poem; for example, Rustam's killing of the White Elephant and his combat with the White Div are respectively first and second in the poem and twelfth and



eighteenth in the reliefs. The two preface scenes (15,16) are framed between two of Rustam's deeds (14,18). This arbitrary order means that the scenes can be "read" as a sequence in either direction or as self-contained stories according to the viewer's choice.

The stucco reliefs in terms of their technical and artistic accomplishment are the confident product of a patron and craftsmen who had access to a sophisticated illustrated source. Although the **Shahnama** was so widely admired in Iranian cultural life at all levels, illustrated editions were luxury products reserved for a narrow elite circle. The introduction, however, of the process of lithography into Ira during the 1840s drastically changed the situation enabling copies of the classic texts to be produced quickly and cheaply and widely circulated (7). The **Shahnama** was an obvious case for treatment and many lithographed editions were printed during the 19th and early 20th centuries in Tabriz and Tehran and also copied in India – at Delhi, Bombay and Lucknow. Two of the most important and copiously illustrated editions were printed in 1849 one in Tehran, the other in Bombay (8). These in turn were frequently reprinted including a re-lithographed edition of 1913 at Bombay (9). In comparing the stucco scenes with the illustrations of various editions it is clear that those printed in

Bombay supplied the main sources, which however were adapted and interpreted rather than directly copied. Features in the 1849 edition such as the style of crowns, turbans and robes , treatment of faces and placement of figures have been observed and then simplified to suit the techniques and limitations of stucco moulding and carving where the fine hatched and shaded detail of the lithograph could not be reproduced.

An analysis of some of the principal scenes indicate how the text illustrations have been interpreted. Detailed treatment of interior furnishing, clothing, ornament and the outdoor scene has been eliminated. Ferdousi's audience with Sultan Mahmud and his court poets has been sharply divided into two scenes by a fringed lattice border (**Plates 11-12 & 16**) and the composition is static with two attendants flanking Mahmud to fill the space and balance the figures below. Rustam's exploits are similarly varied. His killing of the White Elephant (**Plates 9 & 17**) keeps the asymmetry of the illustration but the figures are cut and aligned to suit the vertical format of the panel. The treatment of Rustam's killing of Sohrab (**Plates 5 & 18**) has effectively reduced the original to the minimum. Rustam's victory over the White Div (**Plates 14 & 19**) has also been reduced to a vertical composition of the two protagonists, their positions have been reversed and the bewildered Div grasps at a bulbous tree for



support. Despite the obvious debt of the stucco reliefs to the Bombay edition of the **Shahnama** which version was used? The illustrated lithographed text was deservedly popular requiring continual reprinting both of the original and other revised and embellished versions such as the Bombay edition of 1913. While retaining the format and composition of the early editions this one crowds the scenes with extra figures and fussy detail but is closer to the stucco reliefs in interpretation. In the context of the date of the fort, which was built between 1912 and 1922, and the close contact of Taheri's inhabitants with India it is reasonable to assume that a copy of the 1913 edition was acquired either directly in Bombay or from Bushire still at that time the main port of entry for merchandise from the sub-continent.

Many questions still remain unanswered such as the circumstances which led to the commissioning of these elaborate stucco reliefs, the financial resources allocated to the project, the identity of the craftsmen and their terms of employment. The intentions of the patron are tantalisingly elusive. It seems probable that the balcony was a display area of both the family's status and connections where guests would be suitably impressed by the cultural references of the **Shahnama**.

Footnotes

1. I stayed in the fort from October 1968 to January 1969 cataloguing the small finds of the third season at Siraf which gave me the opportunity to study the remarkable series of stucco reliefs. I acknowledge with gratitude the support of Dr. David Whitehouse in supplying me with information about the background history of the fort and the set of photographs used in this article, and of the Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh (now the Royal Museum of Scotland, National Museums of Scotland) in granting me generous study leave.
2. I am grateful to Warwick Ball for information on the condition of the fort in the 1980s.
3. Sheikh Naser Nasouri who occupied the fort during the 1960s claimed in 1967 that it was built by his grandfather with British money at during the 1914-18 war. Anecdotal information given to me by Dr. Whitehouse, letter of 7th July 1969.
4. Stein, Sir Aurel, *Archaeological Reconnaissances in North-western and South-eastern Iran*, London 1937, p.202
5. Stein op. cit. plate 60
6. During the later part of the reign of Nasiruddin Shah Qajar (1848-96) monochrome stucco fashioned into very elaborate designs of flower bouquets and garlands became very fashionable. Good examples of this style are in the Gulestan



palace, and the Bagh-I Ferdous – a garden pavilion in the north of Tehran.

7. See Robinson, B. W., *The Tehran Nizami and other Qajar lithographed books in Islam in the Balkans and Persian Art and Culture of the 18th and 19th centuries*, Edinburgh 1979 (edited by Jennifer Scarce) pp 61-74 for an excellent account of this change.

8. Lithographed editions of the *Shahnama* in the British Library :Tehran 1849/50 copied by Mustafa Quli b. Muhammad under the direction of Hajji Muhammad Husayn Tehrani, 596 folios, 57 illustrations by Ali Quli Khoyi (2 signed) (reg.no. 757.1.4); Bombay 1849, illustrations by Ali Akbar (reg. no. 14807.h.4). I am grateful to B. W. Robinson for suggesting lithograph illustrations as a possible source.

9. Bombay 1913, Lithograph from the original manuscript and paintings of Aga Awalia Sami Shirazi compiled by Irani Amuzanda Shirmand Nauzar, 10 Frere Road and 218 Bazaar Gate Street, Fort, Bombay (India Office Library London reg.no.306.34.G.16)

از سیراف به کیش : تجارت اقیانوس هند و کیش در عصر مغول

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۱. از انحطاط سیراف تا رونق کیش

در قرن سوم و چهارم هجری (هشتم و نهم میلادی)، سیراف رونق بسیاری در تجارت اقیانوس هند داشت. بازرگانان سیرافی در بنادر خلیج فارس، دریای سرخ، آفریقای شمالی و هند پایگاههای تجاری داشتند و به کمک آنها تجارت می کردند. در منابع چینی از بازرگانان سیرافی با اصطلاح شیلای «Shilavi / Shinavi» و بازرگانی به نام «da-shi fan-ke pu-luo-xin» (ابو رماشت تاجر) یاد شده است. نام وی در اسناد جنازه (geniza) در قاهره و منابع عربی هم یاد شده است. او بزرگترین بازرگان سیرافی در آن زمان بود. از سوی دیگر، از بقایای شهر سیراف قطعات چینی آلاتی که از چین به آنجا آورده شده بودند به مقدار زیاد یافته شده است. به این جهت، آشکار می شود که تجارت سیرافی در چین پایگاه تجاری داشته اند. اما سیراف بعد از زلزله عظیم بتدریج دچار انحطاط شد و دوباره مانند گذشته بازسازی نشد. در باره انحطاط سیراف و مهاجرات سیرافیان، دانشمند ژاپنی استاد یاجیما هیکوئیچی (YAJIMA Hikoichi) چنین نکاشته است^۱:

۱. تغییرات اجتماعی در جهان اسلام در قرن چهارم - پنجم هجری تأثیری زنجیره وار بر توسعه و انحطاط سیراف و مهاجرات سیرافیان داشته است.

^۱ YAJIMA Hikoichi, "The Sirafi Migration in South Arabia," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 5, 1972.

۲. مهاجر نشینها و مسیر مهاجرت بازرگانان و دریانوردان و ملوانان سیرافی با شبکه تجاری که سیرافیان از قدیم تشکیل کرده بودند، مطابق شد.
۳. مهاجرات سیرافیان تاثیر بیشتری بر بازرگانان داخلی همچون تاجران شیراز، ری و سمرقند داشته است و به این ترتیب ایشان به تجارت اقیانوس هند رو نهادند.
۴. شهرهایی که سیرافیان در عربستان جنوبی ساخته بودند مانند صحار، میروبان، عدن و غیزه، هنگامی که بعد از قرن ششم مسلمانان به جنوب غربی هند، آفریقای شرقی، و آسیای جنوب شرقی رفتند، پایگاه مهم تجارت شد.

چنانکه استاد یاجیما هیکوئچی نشان داده است، بعد از انحطاط سیراف شبکه تجاری سیرافیان در اقیانوس هند نابود نشد و به بازرگانان محاجر سیرافی و به ویژه به تجار کیش و عدن به ارث رسید. از جمله جزیره کیش به یاری نیروی نظامی و بازرگانی خود بنادر عمده اقیانوس هند را زیر نظر خود آورد. و خود مرکز تجارت شد. در باره توسعه کیش، «تاریخ و صاف» مطالبی دارد که: اولاد قیصر که ناخدایی سیرافی بود به کیش مهاجرت کردند و بسمت تجارت با اقیانوس هند ثروتمند شدند و بر کیش حکومت یافتند.^۱ در «صفه بلاد الیمن و مکّه و بعض الحجاز» اثر المجاور نیز همین مطلب آمده است.^۱ بدین ترتیب همه منابع با این مطلب که خاندان بنی قیصر در کیش سلطنت داشت، موافقت دارند. استاد یاجیما بر طبق متن ابن المجاور^۲ آشکار کرد که روزگاری اولاد قیصر سیرافی هم در عدن سلطنت یافتند و عدن تحت نظارت کیش بود.^۲ به علاوه، در قرن هفتم، بنی قیصر

^۱ «تاریخ و صاف» ج ۳، شرح استفاح جزایر فارس.

^۱ Ibn al-Mujawir, *Sifat Bilad al-Yaman wa Makkah wa ba'dh al-Hijaz (Tarikh al-Mustabsir)*. (ed.) Löfgren, Oscar, Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1954. ss.287-88. (ابن المجاور «صفه بلاد الیمن و مکّه و بعض الحجاز» («تاریخ المستبصر»)).

^۲ ابن المجاور «صفه بلاد الیمن» ألقاب ملوک عدن من العجم.

^۲ YAJIMA "The Sirafi Migration"; cf. Goitein, S.D., "Two Eyewitness Reports on the Expedition of the King of Kish against Aden," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 16, 1954.

خاندان سلطنتی کیش به هرموز تبعید شدند و سلطنت ملوک هرموز جانشین آنها شد. بنا بر این، می توان نشان داد که کیش، هرموز و عدن که در قرن هفتم-هشتم به سبب تجارت اقیانوس هند رونق داشتند، بر پایه مهاجرت سیرافیان (خاندان بنی قیصر) به وجود آمده بودند. در «تاریخ و صّاف» آمده است که امام سعد الدین مرشد که امام کیش بود کتابی درباره تاریخ خاندان سلطنتی قیصر نوشته بود. اما متأسفانه آن کتاب از بین رفته و به دست ما نرسیده است.

از این زاویه، به عنوان یکی از اسباب انحطاط سیراف، تصور می رود که بازرگانان محاجر سیرافی که به تدریج در کیش و عدن، قدرت گرفتند، در رقابت با سیراف پیروز شدند و سیرافیان را از منافع تجارت محروم کردند.^۲ ابن البلخی در باره انحطاط سیراف و توسعه کیش چنین نوشته است :

سیراف در قدیم شهری بزرگ بودست و آبادان و پر نعمت و مشرع بوزیها و کشتیها و بعهد خلفاء گذشته رضوان الله علیهم در وجه خزانه بودی. بسبب آنک عطر و طیب از کافور و عود و سندل و مانند آن دخل آن بودی. و مالی بسیار از آنجا خاستی و تا آخر روزگار دیلم هم برین جملت بود. بعد از آن پدران امیر کیش مستولی شدند و جزیره قیس و دیگر جزایر بدست گرفتند. و آن دخل گی سیراف را می بود بریده گشت و بدست ایشان افتاد. و رکن الدوله خمارتگین قوت رای و تدبیر آن نداشت گی تلافی این حال کند. و با این همه یک دو بار بسیراف رفت تا کشتیهای جنگی سازد و جزیره قیس و دیگر جزایر بگیرد. و هر بار امیر کیش اورا

^۲ استاد یاجیما در باره اسباب انحطاط سیراف به تغییر مسیر تجارت از خلیج فارس (بغداد) به دریای سرخ (قاهره) که استاد برنارد لوئیس (Bernard Lewis) ادعا کرده، و زلزله عظیم و حکومت دیلمیان که المقدسی نوشته است، اشاره کرده است.

cf. Lewis, B., "The Fatimids and the Routes to india," *Revue de la Faculte des Sciences Économiques d'Istanbul* 11, 1949-50. pp.50-54 ; al-Muqaddasi, *Kitab Ahsan al-Taqaşim fî Ma'rifat al-Aqalim*, B.G.A.3, Leiden, 1906 (المقدسی «کتاب احسن التقاسیم فی معرفه الاقالیم»).

تحفه فرستادی و کسان او را رشوتها دادی تا او را باز گردانیدندی. و بعاقبت چنان شد کی یکی بود از جمله خانان نام او ابو القسم و سیراف نیز بدست گرفت. و بهر دو سه سال کی لشکری را آنجا فرستادی و رنجه کشیدندی از وی چیزی نتوانستندی ستدن. و چون حال آنجا برین گونه بود و هیچ بازرگانی بسیراف کشتی نیارست آورد، از بهر ایمنی راه بکرمان یا مهربان یا دورق و بصره اوگندند و بر راه سیراف جز چرم و زرافه و اسبابی کی پارسیانرا بکار آید نیاوردند و ازین سبب خراب شد.^۱

بدین ترتیب، سیراف انحطاط دچار شد و بعضی از بازرگانان سیرافی پایگاه خود را به کیش، هرموز و عدن انتقال دادند و به تجارت بر اقیانوس هند پرداختند.

۲. خاندان سلطنتی کیش (بنی قیصر) و تجارت اقیانوس هند

در دوره امپراتوری مغول، کیش و هوموز در تجارت خلیج فارس نفوذ بیشتری داشتند. در قرن ۷ (قرن ۱۳ م) بنی قیصر خاندان سلطنتی کیش نفی بلد شدند. بر طبق ایشان به هرموز گریختند. بر طبق نوشته پدرو تیشیرا (Pedro Teixeira) ابا نادر ملک کیش به دست اهل جزیره کیش نفی بلد شد.^۲ بنابراین حکومت بر کیش از خاندان قیصر به خاندان سواملی (الطیبی) منتقل شد. در آن زمان، لشکرهای مغول به ایران تجاوز کرد و ایلخانان قدرت را در دست گرفتند. گرچه مغولان به فارس و کرمان لشکرکشی کردند اما خاندان سواملی کیش رابطه دوستانه ای با ایلخانان برقرار کرد و بر این اساس حکومت کیش را در دست خود نگه داشت. دولت ایلخانان در ولایات ایران اراضی را به اراضی دولتی (دلای یا دیوانی) و اراضی خصوصی (اینجو) تقسیم کرد و امرایی به آنجا

^۱ Ibn al-Balkhi, (ed.) G. Le Strange and R. A. Nicholson, *The Farsnama of Ibnu'l-Balkhi*. London, 1921, s.136. (ابن البلیخی «فارس نامه»)

^۲ Teixeira, Pedro, (tr.) Sinclair, W. F., *Kings of Hormuz*, in *The Travels of Pedro Teixeira*. London: Hakluyt Society, 1902, pp.157-58.

اعزام و حکامی منصوب کرد، مالیته‌ها را از این طریق وصول می‌کرد. فارس نیز چنین وضعی داشت. جمال الدین ابراهیم سواملی که از سوی ایلخان به عنوان ملک اسلام ملقب شد، به عنوان حاکم و مقاطعه کار وصول اموال بر و بحر تعیین شد. جمال الدین ابراهیم نه تنها اموال فارس بلکه مالیات مروارید خلیج فارس را نیز به ایلخانی پرداخت^۴. بدین ترتیب، کیش در عوض اینکه چنان مالیات و هدایاها را به ایلخان می‌داد، از وی پشتیبانی نظامی می‌گرفت. در آن زمان، هرموز به عنوان رقیب کیش در تجارت اقیانوس هند نفوذ خود را گسترش می‌داد. به ویژه که در روزگار بهاء الدین ایاز، دولت هرموز به یاری جاشویان که گروه ملوانان و غواصان مسلح در خلیج فارس بودند بسرعت قدرت خود را تقویت کرد و با کیش اختلاف یافت. کیش از اختلاف داخلی خاندان سلطنتی هرموز استفاده برد و مدتی هرموز را زیر نظر خود آورد. اما هنگامی که بهاء الدین ایاز بر تخت هرموز جلوس کرد، به منظور کسب استقلال شورش کرد. به وقتی که جنگ میان کیش و هرموز وقوع یافت، ایلخان بکلی از کیش حمایت کرد. در ۶۹۶ هجری ایلخان یرلیغ (فرمان) داد که لشکری از مغولان و مسلمانان به هرموز اعزام شود و ملک هرموز بهاء الدین ایاز را از آنجا طرد کند^۵. چنین رابطه همکاری میان کیش و ایلخان ادامه داشت تا وقتی که در روزگار سلطان اولجایتو عزالدین عبد العزیز ملک کیش به اتهامی در اردوی (درگاه) ایلخان اعدام شد^۶. کیش در روزگار خاندان سلطنتی بنی قیصر اقتدار عباسیان و سلجوقیان را به رسمیت شناخت و در عوض اینکه مالیات تجارت اقیانوس هند را به آنان تقدیم می‌کرد، از پشتیبانی آنان بهره می‌گرفت. در مورد ایلخانان هم به همین ترتیب، حکومت ایشان را بر ایران به رسمیت می‌شناختند و در عوض آن از حمایت نظامی آنان بهره مند می‌شدند. از سوی دیگر، طبقه حاکمه ایلخانان مغول خود از داشتن دیوانسالاران در امور

^۴ «تاریخ و صاف» ج. ۳، موضع افراد ذکر، ج. ۴، بقیه سلطنت غازان محمود.

^۵ «تاریخ و صاف» ج. ۳، ذکر جزیره هرموز و شرح بعضی وقایع در مدت تاریخ این کتاب.

^۶ ابو القاسم القاشانی «تاریخ اولجایتو» تهران ۱۳۴۸، سال ۷۱۳؛ محمد شبانکاره ای «مجمع الانساب» ملوک هرموز.

مالی و تجاری محروم بودند. بنابراین به روشنفکران ایرانی که در منابع به عنوان تازیک توصیف شده اند، و برخی از آنان از دیوانیان بودند، نیازمند بودند. مخصوصاً برای کسب مالیات ناشی از تجارت، تسلط غیر مستقیم ایلخانان بر حکومت‌های محلی تاجر پیشه حوضه خلیج فارس ضروری بود.

۳. مناسبات سیاسی و تجاری با چین

حادثه نمادینی که رابطه میان کیش و ایلخان را نشان می دهد، اعزام سفر (ایلچیان) از سوی غازان خان به نزد تیمور قآن در چین بود. میان سلسله یوآن در چین و ایلخانان در ایران به طور پی در پی سفیرانی رفت و آمدی کردند. مثلاً هنگام جلوس قآن در چین، جلوس ایلخان در ایران، و هنگام ازدواجهای سیاسی میان این دو خاندان، سفیرانی ردوبدل می شدند، نیز سفیرانی گسیل می شدند. به علاوه، برای آن که مالیات سرزمین ایلخانی برای قآن در چین ارسال شود، نیز سفیرانی گسیل می شدند. به عنوان مثال غازان خان در ۶۹۷ هجری نو قای ایلچی و فخر الدین احمد را نزد تیمور قآن در چین فرستاد. در باره این سفیران، در «تاریخ و صاف» نوشته شده است^۷ که نو قای سفیری که از درگاه ایلخان مستقیماً فرستاده شد، ترکی زیرک و فصیح بود. فخر الدین احمد پسر شیخ الاسلام جمال الدین ابراهیم سوامیلی رئیس خانواده سوامیلی (آل الطیبی) ملوک کیش بود. در این وقت، احتمالاً فخر الدین به جای پدرش ابراهیم که به عنوان حاکم تعیین شد و به شیراز رفت، حاکمیت حقیقی کیش را در دست داشت. چون ملوک کیش موقتاً هرموز را اشغال کردند، به نام ملک کیش فخر الدین احمد خطبه خواندند و سکه زدند.^۸ گذشته از این، در بلاد معبر در هندوستان، تقی الدین عبد الرحمان برادر جمال الدین ابراهیم القاب و مناصبی چون مرزبان، وزیر، مشیر و صاحب تدبیر

^۷ «تاریخ و صاف» ج. ۴، ذکر بعضی ملوک عصر.

^۸ «تاریخ و صاف» ج. ۳، ذکر جزیره هرموز و شرح بعضی وقایع در مدت تاریخ این کتاب.

تعیین شد و بنادر و تجار را نظارت کرده بود. بعدها چنین مناصب و القابی را فخر الدین احمد به ارث برد.^۹

نوقای ایلچی مأموریتی سیاسی از سوی درگاه ایلخان داشت، اما مأموریت فخر الدین احمد بطور روشن انجام معاملات تجاری میان درگاه ایلخان و بازارهای چین بود. غازان خان به وقت حرکتشان، از خزانه بزرگ صد هزار دینار به عنوان سرمایه تجارت اختصاص داد. پدرش جمال الدین ابراهیم و خویشاوندش و تجار کیش هم به وی سرمایه های سپردند. به علاوه، در این سفر دریائی چین گروهی از ایرانیان با تعدادی ترکمانان که تیراندازی ماهر بودند، به عنوان محافظان همراه شدند.^{۱۰} به نظر می رسد که ایشان جاشویان و ملوانان مسلح بودند که از تجارت کیش پشتیبانی می کردند.

چون سفرا به چین رسیدند، ایشان با استفاده از شبکه ارتباطی یام به دایو تختگاه یوان رسیدند و به حضور تیمور قآن شرفیاب شدند. در این وقت، فخر الدین احمد هدایای غازان خان را به تیمور قآن تقدیم کرد و با درگاه یوان معاملاتی تجاری کرد. بعد از اتمام معامله، تیمور قآن به احمد یرلیغ (فرمان)، لباس خاص، اسبان، مستخدمین و اجازه ای داد که بر اساسی آن می توانست هرچه پیشنهاد شود معامله رود. بنابراین می توان قضاوت کرد که مقصود غازان خان خواستار مناسبات تجاری با چین بود.

کالاهای که فخر الدین احمد به چین آورد نه تنها شامل مروارید خلیج فارس بلکه جواهر هندوستان و سیلان نیز بودند. بنابراین می توان دانست که سفیران مذکور بعد از آنکه در مسیر خود به هندوستان رفته و پس از انجام داد و ستد، کالاهای خود را دوباره بارگیری کردند، و به چین عازم شدند. منطقه ملیبار در هند

^۹ «تاریخ و صاف» ج. ۳، صفت ممالک هند بطریق اجمال و ذکر ملوک معبر.

^{۱۰} «تاریخ و صاف» ج. ۴، ذکر بعضی ملوک عصر.

مخصوصاً کولم به عنوان بندر عمده ای برای تجارت میان خلیج فارس و چین از قدیم رونق داشت و بازرگانان و کالاها از سراسر جهان در آنجا جمع می شدند. چنانکه مذکور شد، خاندان سلطنتی آل الطیبی (سواملی) کیش هم در بنادر هند پایگاه های تجاری داشتند و از طریق صادرات کالاهای مانند اسبان سودهای زیادی به دست می آوردند. از سوی دیگر، آنان احتمالاً در چین نیز پایگاه های تجاری را داشتند و نمایندگانی از سوی خود در آنجا داشتند همچنانکه بازرگانان سیرافی و بنی قیصر (ملوک سابق کیش) در آنجا نمایندگانی داشتند. ابن حجر العسقلانی در باره پدر احمد، جمال الدین ابراهیم نوشته است که دخل فی تجاره إلی الصين فتوغل و تمول (او برای تجارت به چین رفت و ثروتمند شد)^{۱۱}. لذا به نظر می رسد که علت عمده شکوفائی کیش در روزگار جمال الدین ابراهیم کیش تجارت با چین بوده است. به همین ترتیب، در «تاریخ وصاف» در باره علت رونق کیش نوشته شده است که به سبب کالاهای که از چین و هند آورده می شدند، کیش رونق بی سابقه یافته بود و نمایندگانی (وکلا، وکیلان) در هند و چین داشتند که از سوی آنان در آنجا تجارت کنند^{۱۲}.

از این زاویه می توان نشان داد که پیش از آنکه فخر الدین احمد به عنوان سفیر به چین برود، کیش پایگاه ای تجاری در چین داشته است. به عبارت دیگر، این بدان معنا است که ایلخانان شبکه ای تجاری در اقیانوس هند از طریق کیش داشتند و با استفاده از آن سفیران را تا چین می فرستادند.

۴. شبکه تجارتی کیش و بازرگانان چینی

از سوی دیگر، بازرگانان چینی تا اقیانوس هند و خلیج فارس رفت و آمد می کردند. در چین جنوبی خاندان یانگ (Yang) که بازرگانان بزرگی بودند اقامت

^{۱۱} ابن حجر العسقلانی «الدرر الكامنة فی اعیان المائنة الثامنة» بیروت، ۱۹۹۸/۱۴۱۸، ج. ۱، ش. ۱۵۹.

^{۱۲} «تاریخ وصاف» ج. ۳، صفت ممالک هند بطریق اجمال و ذکر ملوک معبر.

داشتند. از میان ایشان، یانگ شو (Yang-shu) هنگامی که برای تجارت در یک بندر اقیانوس هند اقامت کرده بود، در آنجا با نوقای و فخر الدین احمد، سفیران غازان خان روبرو شد و مستقیماً ایشان را به دایدو (تختگاه یوآن) در چین راهنمایی کرد. علاوه بر این، هنگام مراجعت سفیران غازان خان، یانگ شو به همراه آنان به ایران آمد و به درگاه ایلخانی رسید. در این زمان دولت یوآن به یانگ شو منصب سفیر رسمی را ارزانی داشت. در عین حال، دولت یوآن برای یانگ شو سرمایه های برای تجارت و یک کشتی تدارک دید. چون یانگ شو خود از خاندانی بازرگان بود، توانست سرمایه و کالای تجارتی به همراه ببرد. وی در مسیر خود به هرموز رفت و در آنجا دادوستد کرد. البته این امور بی ارتباط با شبکه تجارتی کیش در اقیانوس هند که سابقاً سیرافیان بنا کرده بودند، نبود. می توانیم بگوئیم از طریق فعالیت های تجارتی میان خلیج فارس و چین، توسط دولت مغول به هم وصل شدند. مطالب مذکور در بالا در یک منبع چینی «*Jing-hua-huang xian-sheng wen-ji*» («مجموعهء خواجه جینگ هوا هوانگ») یادداشت قبر آقای یانگ امیر هزار کشتیرانی ایالت سونگ جیانگ و ایالت جیا دینگ¹ توصیف شده است.¹ این منبع را زیر ارائه می کنم.

«*Jing-hua-huang xian-sheng wen-ji*» («مجموعهء خواجه جینگ هوا هوانگ»)

"یادداشت قبر آقای یانگ (Yang) امیر هزارهء کشتیرانی در ایالت سونگ جیانگ (Song-jiang) و ایالت جیا دینگ (Jia-ding)"

¹ Huang-jin, *Jin-hua-huang Xian-sheng Wen-ji*. vol.35, "Song-jiang Jia-ding deng chu hai-yun qian-hu Yang-jun mu-zhi-ming," library of *Si-bu cong-kan*. (Chinese classics)

اجداد خاندان یانگ (Yang) ثروتمند و شرافمند بوده اند. در دوره خاندان سلطنتی سونگ (Song)، از منطقه مین (Min) به منطقه یوئه (Yue) و از آنجا به منطقه او (Wu) نقل مکان کرده بودند و در آخر در گان پو (Gan-pu) اقامت کرده بودند. ایشان نسل به نسل به خاطر استعداد و شجاعت صاحب مناصب شده بودند. در دوره یوان (Yuan)، مأمورین علی رتبه شده بودند و یک از قدرتمندترین خاندان ها شده بودند. ...

در سال پنجم "داده" (Dade) (مطابق ۷۰۱ هجری)، یانگ شو (Yang Shu) که در آن وقت نوزده ساله بود، با کشتی و سرمایه ای که زی یونگ یوان (zhi-yong-yuan: دیوان تجارتی و اراتاقی) تدارک دیده بود، سفری در دریا کرد و به اقیانوس هند رسید. در آنجا با نوقای و غیره سفیران غازان خان که به تختگاه یوان رو نهاده بودند، ملاقات کرده بود. بنابراین او به همراهی سفیران غازان به چین مراجعت کرد. نوقای و دیگران بعد از شرفیابی و تقدیم هدایا، خواستند که یانگ شو با ایشان همراهی کند و آنان را رساند. به این جهت، ارغسون ترخان چنگسانگ بر اساس چنان درخواست که به قآن عرض شده بود، یانگ شو را به عنوان صاحب پادگان و معاون امیر هزاره کشتیرانی تعیین کرد و او را پایزه زر داده، و فرمان داد تا یانگ شو با سفرای غازان همراهی کند. در سال هشتم "داده" (Dade) (مطابق ۷۰۴ هجری)، ایشان از تختگاه یوان عزیمت کردند و در سال دهم "داده" (Dade) (مطابق ۷۰۶ هجری)، به ایران رسیدند. و پا به خشکی ای به نام هرموز نهادند. ...

یانگ شو به مدت پنج سال در میان بادهای شدید و امواج عظیم دریا رفت و آمد می کرد. کشتی و سرمایه برای تجارت را خود تدارک دیده و به مأمورین زحمت نمی داد. او از سرمایه خود محصولات محلی مانند اسب های سفید، سگ های سیاه، کهربا، شراب و نمک خرید و با خود به چین برد و به درگاه یوان تقدیم کرد.

چنای فنچان (وزیر) و دیگران او را به اردو بردند و بعد از شرفیابی به وی هدایایی عطا کردند. اما یانگ شو هوای مدتی بعد مسموم و بیمار شد.

خاندان یانگ تجار بزرگی بودند که نسل به نسل در دولت یوان مناصب داشتند. ایشان معمولاً مناصب مهم مربوط به کشتیرانی و تجارت دریایی در دولت یوان را عهده دار بودند. به عبارت دیگر، دولت یوان برای کسب سود تجارت در اقیانوس هند، رابطه نزدیکی را با خاندان یانگ لازم داشت. از این زاویه، می توان نشان داد که رابطه همکاری میان خاندان یانگ و دولت یوان مشابه با رابطه همکاری میان خاندان سواملی کیش و ایلخانان بود.

۵. کیش و دولت ایلخانان مغول

مناسبات میان دولت ایلخانان مغول و بازرگانان، شامل دو مراحل است. مرحله اول آن بود که تجار مخصوصی طبقه حاکمه (ارتاقان) از سوی دولت ایلخانان مغول سرمایه و امتیاز دریافت می کردند و اداره سرمایه تجاری را بر عهده داشتند.^{۱۳} مرحله دیگر آن بود که دولت ایلخانان مغول نه تنها بازرگانانی که عنوان ارتاقان را داشتند را با دادن مناصب به درون ساختار دیوانی کشید، بلکه چنانکه خاندان های بزرگ تاجر پیشه را حمایت کرد و در عین حال بر آنان نظارت می کرد چنانکه جمال الدین ابراهیم ملک کیش و فخر الدین احمد یا یانگ شو و خاندانش، در آغاز به عنوان ارتاق سرمایه های می گرفتند و تجارتی کردند. از سوی دیگر، ایشان نقش ملک التجار را ایفا می کردند. در باره آنکه خاندان سواملی کیش دارای روابطی با ارتاقان بود، در منابع مطالبی به چشم می خورد.^{۱۴}

^{۱۳} ارتاق بدان معنا نهادی که طبقه حاکمه مغولان به بازرگانان سرمایه و امتیاز داد و گذاشتند ایشان را سرمایه جاری بکنند یا بازرگانان صلاحیتدار آن است. در زبان ترکی به معنای شریک است. آن اصل رابطه همراهی میان بازرگانان و چادر نشینان از قدیم است.

^{۱۴} ناصر الدین منشی کرمانی «سمط العلی للحضرة العلیا» طهران، ۱۳۲۸. باب مظفر الدینا و الدین ابو الحارث شاه سلطان حجاج.



بخصوص شرحی که رشید الدین فضل الله نوشته است "چند سال باز ملکی شیراز ارتاقان و بازرگانان می کنند"، آشکارا نمایانگر آن بود که جمال الدین ابراهیم به عنوان حاکم شیراز حکومت می کرده است.^{۱۵} بدین ترتیب، ملوک کیش از طریق ارسال نمایندگانی تجاری از سوی خود به مراکز تجاری بین المللی و همچنین از طریق نفوذ در دیوانسالاری ایلخانان، تجاری چون ایشان در زیر حمایت دولت مغول می توانستند بطور فعال تجارتشان را گسترش دهند. در مقابل، دولت ایلخانان مغول از میان خاندانهای تاجران پرنفوذ کسانی را به عنوان مأمورین امور مالی گماشت و در امور نظامی و اداری ایشانرا پشتیبانی می کرد و از طرف دیگر از ایشان مالیات تجارت می گرفت.

بر این اساس، ملوک کیش با حمایت نظامی لشکر ایلخانی هرموز را که گامی شورش می کرد حفظ می کرد، سر بلند کرد و سلطه خود بر تجارت اقیانوس هند را نگاه می داشت. لیکن به محض اینکه یک بار رابطه همکاری میان خاندان سواملی کیش و ایلخانان شکسته شد، کیش قدرت و نفوذ خود را در تجارت اقیانوس هند از دست داد و هرموز بجای کیش از امتیاز تجارت انحصاری در خلیج فارس را بدست آورد. در سال ۷۳۲ هجری به سبب حمله ملوک هرموز، کیش همه پایگاه های تجارتی مانند بحرین و قطیف و غیره را از دست داد و حکومت خاندان سواملی در کیش به پایان رسید.^۱ به علاوه در نتیجه حملات مکرر ملوک هرموز، امتیاز تجاری که کیش داشت بکلی به ملوک هرموز سپرده شد.^۲ بنابراین کیش که بعد از انحطاط سیراف شبکه ای تجاری در اقیانوس هند برقرار بود، از صحنه تاریخ محو شد.

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^{۱۵} رشید الدین فضلالله همدانی «جامع التواریخ» تهران، ۱۳۷۳، ج ۲، داستان قویلی قان، تاریخ ملوک و اتابکان در فارس.

^۱ Teixeira, Pedro, *Kings of Hornuz*. in *The Travels of Pedro Teixeira*., p.173.

^۲ Teixeira, Pedro, *Kings of Hornuz*. in *The Travels of Pedro Teixeira*., p.257.

The Rise of Siraf: Long-Term Development of Trade Emporia within the Persian Gulf.

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Abstract

The esteemed historian of Indian Ocean trade, K.N. Chaudhuri wrote: "the rise of Siraf...is well attested, but curiously enough never properly explained" (1985: 48). While no pretence is made to being able to offer a full answer to this question, I hope to be able to set out the context in which the rise of Siraf occurred, which should in itself help to frame the question more clearly and provide some clues as to the nature and direction of events at this time. In fact, a partial answer to Chaudhuri's question has already been provided implicitly in an article on Sasanian maritime trade written by Whitehouse and Williamson (1973), which juxtaposes the evidence from Williamson's investigations at Bushehr and the excavations at Siraf. Elsewhere Williamson made an explicit case for the connection between the demise of the trade emporium at Bushehr in the 9th century and the subsequent dramatic expansion of Siraf during the same period 220km further down the Persian Gulf coast. What Williamson did not do however was to develop the point or consider its significance.

It is now widely acknowledged that the early 9th century was marked by significant changes in the scale of long-distance trade in the Indian Ocean, with ships setting out from the Persian Gulf and making direct voyages to and from the Far East for the first time in history. These voyages signify a significant change in mercantile behaviour and in the structure of Indian Ocean trade as a whole. Furthermore, these changes



were intimately bound up with the history of Siraf itself, which represented one of the main trade emporia within the Persian Gulf for which much of this trade was bound. The break from a previous pattern of long-distance trading, which mostly involved trade between the Persian Gulf and India or separate legs for goods coming from further east beyond this point, is significant, especially when it appears to have been marked by a shift in the focus of activities within the Persian Gulf itself.

Andrew Williamson's survey of the Bushehr peninsular carried out over a number of visits between 1969-71 proved conclusively that Bushehr had acted as a major centre of population during the Sasanian and very early Islamic periods, with sites spread across the peninsular and major concentrations at Rishahr and Halileh (Whitehouse & Williamson, 1973: fig. 4). The scale of this activity together with its location and certain important details indicating that Bushehr acted as a major port, make the argument that Williamson put forward linking Bushehr to the historical port of Rev Ardashir, virtually irrefutable. Rev Ardashir, it is known, was founded by Ardashir I as part of a deliberate policy to promote and dominate trade within the Persian Gulf and the port went on to become the major centre of Sasanian maritime activity. Williamson's survey of the peninsular has shown that the city reached its greatest extent and probably influence towards the end of the Sasanian period and into the Early Islamic period, between the 5th - 8th centuries, but that it fell into catastrophic decline during the first quarter of the 9th century (Williamson, 1971-72: 37). A more recent survey carried out in the winter of 2004 that deliberately set out to understand the wider relations between Bushehr and its immediate hinterland, has indicated, at a preliminary level at least, that it may not just have been the port cities of Bushehr that fell into decline, but actually large parts of the regional settlement system (Carter, Challis, Priestman & Tofighian, forthcoming). This dramatic shift in economic fortunes from Bushehr to Siraf, at the same

time as the structure of Indian Ocean trade was in transition, should in itself be able to tell us a great deal about the nature of the developments occurring at this time.

Carter, R.A, Challis, K., Priestman, S.M.N. & Tofighian, H. forthcoming: The Bushehr Hinterland. Results of the First Season of the Iranian-British Archaeological Survey of Bushehr Province, November-December 2004.

Chaudhuri, K.N. 1985: Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean. An Economic History from the Rise of Islam. Munishiram Manoharlal: New Delhi.

Whitehouse, D. & Williamson, A.G. 1973: 'Sasanian maritime trade', Iran, 11: 29-49.

Williamson, A.G. 1971-72: 'Chapter 5. Rishahr and the development of trade from the 3rd to the 7th centuries A.D.'. In The Maritime Cities of the Persian Gulf and their Commercial Role from the 5th Century to 1507. Unpublished PhD: Ashmolean Museum Archive, Oxford.

The role of Siraf and the reasons for its existence cannot be understood in geographic or historic isolation. Clearly as a port city, it functioned as part of a bigger network of trade and its geographic position was fixed in relation to the other nodes within the contemporary trade network. Similarly, in a historical sense, the reasons for Siraf's rise and decline in importance over a period of about two hundred a fifty, three hundred years, was not arbitrary, it was determined by factors particular to that juncture of history within the Persian Gulf. At the same time,



because Siraf occupied a unique moment of history its particular function may well have been specific. My aim in this paper is to explore the conditions preceding the emergence of Siraf in order to attempt to explain how Siraf rose to importance and to consider what implications the rise of Siraf has for the historical changes occurring during this period.

The starting point for this particular enquiry into Siraf is the research that has been undertaken on the pottery from Andrew Williamson's survey of the Persian Gulf coast that he carried out between 1968 and 1971. Since October 2001 with generous support from the British Institute of Persian Studies, research has been carried out by the present author and Dr. Derek Kennet, at the University of Durham, on the substantial collection of pottery that Andrew Williamson exported to the United Kingdom, which forms the counterpart to the materials housed at the National Museum in Tehran. Andrew Williamson himself was prevented from bringing this work to publication by his tragic death in 1975 at the age of just thirty. What he succeeded in accomplishing in Iran was however unique. Over the space of just three years, and about eighteen months of fieldwork, he undertook a very large scale and rapid survey of most of the Persian Gulf coast of Iran, from Bushehr to Jask, as well as an inland survey through Fars in the area between

Bushehr, Shiraz and Sirjan and in Kerman from the Minab Delta, through most of the valley systems leading up towards Jiroft. Throughout the survey, Williamson focussed only on the remains from the Sasanian and Islamic eras, although for most of the survey he was accompanied by Martha Prickett, who made a record of the prehistoric sites that they encountered. The type of survey that Williamson undertook was by no means detailed and the nature of the information that he collected was basic; just small samples of pottery collected off the surface of sites. What the Collection does provide is the opportunity to look at ceramic distributions and site distributions over a very wide area. These can be used to build up generalised, but also very broad models of change across the region as a whole.

One of the important aspects that it has been possible to provide evidence for through the Williamson Collection is what appears to be a long and continuous sequence, involving successive major emporia within the Persian Gulf and a continuous migration of one major emporium to the next. This migration appears to start higher up within the Persian Gulf, and over a period of about one thousand eight hundred years or more, moves down towards its mouth. Siraf was one of these major emporia, which at one time dominated the flow of trade through the Persian Gulf. The events that mark the end of Siraf's period



of dominance are reasonably well known. The earthquake in 977 AD may well have substantially weakened the site, making it more vulnerable and susceptible to attack, though it is clear that the site continued to be occupied well beyond that date. Finally, in the early 11th century, the emerging power base centred on the Island of Kish, which had posed a constant threat throughout the waning period of Siraf, won out and most of the trade was shifted to this new port. Kish itself became a major emporium able to dominate trade within the Persian Gulf between the 11th - 13th centuries. At the same time, a new rival began to accrue power in the Minab Delta at the city of Old Hormuz. During the earlier 14th century, the city was moved out to Jarun Island, probably to make it less vulnerable to attack. Certainly there must have been a significant reason for the move as the island has no natural water sources and the added expenditure needed to maintain a settlement there must have been significant. Historical sources suggest that at about the same time that the city was re-founded, Hormuzi forces won a significant battle over the navy of Kish. Following these events, the port at Kish is thought to have fallen into rapid decline with most of the trade being shifted down into the mouth of the Persian Gulf.

Part of the argument for the rise in importance of Hormuz during the earlier 14th century, apart from the historical

information related to the battle, was based on the finds of early Chinese Blue and White Porcelain on the island and the understanding that this pottery came into circulation within the Persian Gulf during this period. The recent research on the substantial body of Chinese Blue and White pottery in the Williamson Collection suggests that 14th century material was still extremely rare even if it was arriving in the courts of Persia by this date. In fact, significant trade assemblages do not appear to start arriving in the area until the late 15th/early 16th centuries. This can be seen clearly by plotting the number of Chinese Blue and White sherds in the Collection by period.

In the light of this revaluation of Chinese Blue and White circulation based on survey assemblages rather than court standard material, the 14th century finds from Jarun Island, even if they were correctly identified, may not actually be significant in terms of major trading activity. An understanding of when this trade activity switched can be gained by looking at the substantial assemblages of other wares in the Williamson Collection from the two islands of Kish and Jarun. Looking at the total number of East Asian sherds by period from each island, one can see that in fact the major point of eclipse in terms of long-distance trade to the islands appears to occur sometime during the 15th or 16th centuries, perhaps as a result of



European interventions in Persian Gulf trade, rather than as a result of the victory that Hormuz claimed over Kish in the 14th century.

The sequence that has been presented from the rise of Siraf, to Kish, to Hormuz is undoubtedly over-simplified and there are likely to have been many factors involved in the evolution of the trade network within the Persian Gulf during the long period under consideration. In essence, however, there appears to be good evidence to suggest, both historically and archaeologically, that at any one time there was one major trade emporium situated on the northern shore of the Persian Gulf, that that emporium occupied an axial position within the Persian Gulf trade network and that over time as one centre fell into decline another rose to power. In addition there appears to be a trend, whereby these trade emporia shifted over time from higher up in the Gulf towards its mouth. This trend itself may well be related to wider developments in the structure of Indian Ocean trade, a point that will be returned to below.

Coming back to the origins of Siraf: it is clear that the port was part of a wider trade emporia system. Even in the earliest levels at the site, before the major architectural developments seen in the construction of the mosque or the houses in the deep

sounding in Trench A, substantial volumes of East Asian pottery were arriving at the site, mostly in the form of green glazed Dusun jars and painted stoneware Changsha bowls. These finds are amongst the earliest East Asian imports recovered within the Persian Gulf. In a detailed examination of the historical and archaeological evidence related to the origins of direct trading with East Asia, Williamson and Whitehouse concluded that such trade did not begin until the early Islamic period, despite some potential earlier references. If they were correct, then this phase at Siraf marks a significant change in the scale, direction and organisation of Indian Ocean trade. Recently a fortuitous discovery was made of a shipwreck off the island of Belitung in the western Java Sea off the coast of Indonesia, dated to 826AD or slightly later, built of wood from Africa and/or India, constructed following an Arab (or equally Persian) design and loaded with a cargo of 56,500 Changsha bowls stacked inside Dusun jars. Although it is difficult to prove, there is every reason to believe that this ship was bound for the Persian Gulf. If so it confirms what has already been described historically and is indicated from the archaeological evidence from Siraf; that direct voyages were being made by local merchants to China at this early date.

The available evidence points to a significant realignment of trade at the very end of the 8th or beginning of the 9th century,



however the emporia system was not itself new. In the same paper as that referred to above, Williamson and Whitehouse were able to present a powerful argument suggesting that long-distance maritime trade was already an important part of the economy and flourishing under the previous Sasanian administration. Williamson's detailed survey of the Bushehr peninsular over a number of successive visits was significant in the recognition of this point. From his survey he identified over 450 hectares of mounded occupation at Rishahr, another substantial urban scale site on the south of the peninsula at Halileh and Hazar Mardom and a more or less continuous scatter of settlements strung out across the peninsula between these two sites. In total Williamson may have recorded as many as many as 200 hundred archaeological sites across the peninsula, although only 89 of these are represented in Williamson's archives and the Ashmolean Museum's Collection. The site a Rishahr alone, was the largest site that Williamson identified for any period along the whole of the coastal stretch from Bushehr to Jask.

Although others had noted the richness of the archaeological remains in the Bushehr area before, Williamson was the first to recognise that the overwhelming majority of these sites were occupied during the Partho-Sasanian period. He was also the

first to make a detailed argument for the identification of these ruins with the major Sasanian port on the Persian Gulf, Rev Ardashir. Historical texts indicate that Rev Ardashir was the main trade emporium within the Persian Gulf during the period and that it maintained regular direct trade links with India from as early as the 3rd century. It was in this city that the seat of the metropolitan of the Nestorian Church was established, from where bishops were ordained throughout the main cities of southern Iran, Bahrain, Socotra, southern India and Sri Lanka. Williamson's identification of the site is not without controversy. Most scholars appear to agree on an etymological connection between the name Rev Ardashir and Rishahr, however there are two modern villages of this name: one in Arrajan and the other on the Bushehr peninsula. The former site was favoured by Ghirshman as the site of Rev Ardashir, based on a short aerial reconnaissance that he made of the area. Others have claimed that the site at Arrajan is actually comprised of little more than a fishing village. This cannot be said of the massive Sasanian period ruins at Rishahr on Bushehr. The scale of the site combined with details such as a large stone built pier linked conclusively to the Sasanian period and finds of Indian pottery of Sasanian date, make the identification of Rev Ardashir on Bushehr very persuasive.



In the winter of 2004, a five-week joint British-Iranian archaeological survey was undertaken of the Bushehr hinterland direct by Dr. Carter of the University of Durham and Mr Tofighian of the Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research, with Hamed Zar'eh as the local representative of the Bushehr Cultural Heritage Organisation and Seth Priestman as ceramic finds advisor from the University of Durham. One of the aims of the survey during the initial season was to explore the potential for research into the agricultural hinterland to the Sasanian port cities on the Bushehr peninsular. During the Sasanian period, Bushehr clearly supported a substantial population, though the peninsula itself has no natural water supply and little available land with agricultural potential. The subsistence of the population is therefore likely to have depended to a large extent on local agricultural production. Bushehr is also one of the few places on the Iranian shore of the Persian Gulf with a substantial cultivable hinterland. It would therefore have been ideally situated to fulfil the demands both of a port and of a sustainable urban centre. The only recent internationally known research on the Bushehr hinterland is that by Donald Whitcomb, based on a short survey that he made of the area in 1973 and a study of aerial photographs of the area. One of the main discoveries of his research was the identification of a substantial canal taken off from the Dalaki-Rud, to the north of Borazjan and running

for over 40km across the Borozjan plane down to Shif. From Shif, he proposed that it was carried out on an aqueduct across the straight to the Bushehr peninsula, via Shif Island, where it would have been carried by pipes to the settlements of Rishahr and Halileh. One of the aims of the 2004 Bushehr Hinterland Survey was to examine the so-called 'Angali canal' to establish its existence on the ground and to look at settlement in relation to it. Prior to the investigation it seemed reasonable to assume that the Sasanian port cities of Rishahr and Halileh together represented a maritime centre within the Persian Gulf and regional centre supported by a rural hinterland with long-distance redistribute routes leading towards the major Sasanian centres in Inland Fars.

The first significant point that arose from the recent field survey was that the 'Angali canal' does not in fact appear to be a canal. Inspection at several points along its course revealed nothing but an entirely level plane. At the bend in the river where the canal was supposed to have been taken off, there is actually a modern pumping station providing water for a small irrigation channel. At the same point, there is also a sizable Sasanian site. Before pump technology, however, the water would have had to be lifted up about ten metres to reach the height of the surrounding plane and even if this had been done, the flow of the river



seemed too weak to support a 40km canal. At the sea end of the canal, at Shif, there is a small port, which is still in use. During the 17th - 19th centuries, when Bushehr acted as the main port within the Persian Gulf for the Dutch and English East India Companies, Shif provided the main route for boats carrying goods on and off the peninsula and was used in preference to the slower and more treacherous route across the mud flats that separate the peninsula. At Shif a series of low mounds were examined belonging to the 12th - 14th centuries, a period which saw minor reoccupation on Bushehr peninsula. Next to these there was also a larger single mound belonging to the Sasanian period. Between Shif and Bushehr, there is a wide stretch of sea deep enough at least for the large fishing boats that dock out off Shif Island today. It seems inconceivable that this stretch of water was ever crossed by an aqueduct. Instead, it seems far more likely that Shif acted as a ferry point throughout the major periods of occupation on the Bushehr peninsula. Taken together the evidence related to the linear feature identified by Whitcomb and seen clearly on recent satellite images, must be given a different interpretation.

Another of the significant 'discoveries' made during the recent Bushehr Hinterland Survey, was that at the end of the linear feature, which Dr. Carter interprets plausibly as a road, there is a

very large Hellenistic/Sasanian site of at least 300 hectares. This city is actually known to many Iranian archaeologists and has been one of the subjects of Mr. Yaghma'i and Dr. Sarfaraz' investigations for many years. Outside of Iran, there appears to be no knowledge of the site. The presence of this site, which has no name, historical or modern, certainly challenges any concept of the port cities of Bushehr as a regional centre provided for by its own rural hinterland. Clearly there were two large cities, which appear to have been intimately linked by a direct road leading between them. Bushehr probably acted primarily as a port and entrepôt, while the inland city lay within the heartland of the agricultural hinterland and close to many other Hellenistic and Sasanian sites that were recorded during the recent survey. What role this city played in coordinating the provision of subsistence commodities to Bushehr and the redistribution of goods from the port is not clear, however the relationship between Bushehr and its hinterland was clearly more complex than was originally envisaged.

The main dating evidence for both the inland city and the ruins on Bushehr, has been provided by the inspection of surface scatters of ceramics. During the 2004 Bushehr Hinterland Survey, a rapid inspection was made of most of the city to the north of Borazjan. The collections that were made indicated that

the ruins all fell within the Hellenistic and Sasanian periods, though the largest mounds roughly occupying the centre of the site, produced finds that related exclusively to the later half of the Sasanian period, roughly 6th - 8th centuries. On Bushehr, the evidence is slightly more problematic. Williamson only focussed on the Sasanian and later periods, so there are very few Hellenistic finds contained within the Williamson Collection. At the same time Williamson did mention that the ruins across the peninsula were mostly Partho-Sasanian in date and this does appear to be confirmed by the brief inspections that the author has been able to make at Hazar Mardom. By the later Sasanian period, settlement on the peninsula appears to have reached its peak. Williamson was able to show that a single late Sasanian type fossil, which he attributed to the 5th - 7th centuries, was distributed across the full extent of the 450 hectares of mounding at Rishahr and widely across the rest of the peninsula. This type, which is an Alkaline-Glazed Ware basin with lug handles, a light olive-green glaze and distinctive bifurcating rim, was dated by Williamson by its absence from 3rd - 4th century levels at Coche in Iraq and from the earliest levels at Siraf. More recently a significant number of sherds belonging to this form were recovered from the stratified and fully quantified sequence at Kush, where the 5th - 7th century dating has been reconfirmed.

Shortly after the apogee of the Bushehr ports, there is evidence for a major settlement collapse across the peninsula, probably during the 9th century. The study recently undertaken of the Williamson Collection proves this point conclusively. Looking at the number of settlements occupied by period, one can see a drop of over half the number of sites between the 6th - 9th to 9th - 11th centuries. The dating for these figures is again based on the ceramics collected from the sites. If one only counts those sites were more than 10% of the assemblage relates to the periods in question, then the drop in site numbers appears even more striking. Williamson himself recognised this trend and estimated that at Rishahr the settled area dropped from 450 hectares to just 20 during the 9th century. This pattern appears to be confirmed by the author's own brief inspection of Hazar Mardom and other collections inspected from Rishahr, which are devoid of common Abbasid period indicators, such as appliqué decorated Alkaline-Glazed Ware or the Samarra Horizon wares.

What caused the apparently sudden collapse of one of the major entrepôt within the Persian Gulf is difficult to tell, especially after what appears to have been a long and sustained period of growth, starting sometime within the Hellenistic period or earlier and continuing all the way through to the later Sasanian period. Interestingly, at the same time as the major settlement



and maritime centre of Bushehr fell into decline, the inland city north of Borozjan was also abandoned. If these two centres were intimately linked, as has been proposed, then it appears that it was not just the settlement on the peninsula that collapsed, but also the whole of the regional settlement system. Closely following these events, probably not earlier than the 9th century, there appears to have been a major reoccupation of the site of Tawwaj, several kilometres to the north of the abandoned Sasanian city. Tawwaj also appears to have been occupied in Hellenistic times, probably on a more limited scale, but there was no evidence relating to the Sasanian period. When activity on the site was resumed, it appears that it was across the whole site simultaneously. This corresponds with available historical information, which indicates that a planned city was laid down at the site after the Arab conquest. It seems probable that the abandonment of the Sasanian city and the reoccupation of Tawwaj was a linked event and it may well have been that a substantial part of the population from the Sasanian city moved to the new site. What seems less likely is that this event was linked to the Arab conquest, as the occupation of Tawwaj occurred some time later in a period contemporary with the pre-architectural horizon activities at Siraf.

As with the foundation of Tawwaj, the main explanation that has been given for the abandonment of Rishahr is that the city was sacked and destroyed during the Arab conquests. If this had occurred then it would have been at the height of the city's prosperity. More recently the processes involved in the spread of Islam to Persia have been viewed in a less destructive and dramatic way. In any case, the dating from Rishahr and other related sites, including the inland Sasanian city and Tawwaj, suggest that these major upheavals in the area may have occurred at least one and a half centuries after the spread of Islam and at a time when other significant changes were taking place within the Persian Gulf region. One of the important elements of this change was the growth of the new port city of Siraf, two hundred a fifty kilometres down the coast, at exactly the same time that the major ports on Bushehr were falling rapidly into decline. One of the explanations that has been given for the growth of Siraf is the events that were occurring in southern Iraq. In particular, revolt of the Zanj African minority in Basra, which caused large-scale disruptions to the area's trade. The events in Basra may well themselves have been symptomatic of bigger processes occurring in southern Iraq at the time, as shortly after from the 10th century, the whole region appears to have fallen into a pattern of significant economic decline. It seems likely that as at Siraf, one of the important functions of Bushehr would have been the transshipment of goods



between the main redistribution centres in southern Iraq and the deep draught shipping, which carried goods to and from destinations beyond the shores of the Persian Gulf. Clearly there were many factors involved in the changing structure of trade and economy within the Persian Gulf at this time. Central it seems may have been the break up of the long standing power base centred in southern Iraq and the growth of new types of mercantile activity within the Indian Ocean, driven at this time primarily by merchants from the Persian Gulf. The scope remains for a much more specific understanding of these changes. What seems apparent now is the fate of several large trade emporia within the Persian Gulf were affected and that the growth of Siraf can be seen as a direct consequence of these processes and specifically the decline of former major centre that had flourished throughout the Sasanian and early Islamic period at Bushehr. With this shift, one sees the beginning of a process of emporia migration, which resulted in the end in the main Persian Gulf port being situated at its mouth. Again there are many processes involved in these events, however they do seem to be symptomatic of the gradual trend towards a growing cross-continental trade within the Indian Ocean, which stands in contrast to the thriving inter-Persian Gulf trade that existed during the Sasanian and to a lesser extent earlier Islamic periods.

Revisiting Siraf as a Persian Gulf Commercial Port in the late Sassanian and Early Islamic Period: What Archaeology and Contemporaneous Manuscripts Reveal

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Abstract

One of the major lacunae in middle East studies is a comprehensive account of the economic history of the Persian Gulf. Although there exists considerable documentary material to compile such a history for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of the common Era (CE), studies to date have been limited by their focus on either the Arab or Iranian side of the Persian Gulf and also a tendency to ignore the important cross-gulf trade links that have been dominant features of the region for centuries. Textual evidence from earlier periods is not as extensive, but the extant sources from the ninth to the eighteenth centuries do attest to the presence of significant trading centers along the Persian Gulf coast, especially on the Iranian side extending from the general area of present-day Bushehr to present-day Bandar-e Abbas. Among these cities was Siraf, an important, if not the primary, port for about 100 years before being devastated by an earthquake in 977. Reconstructing the history of siraf is an intellectual task that can contribute to an understanding of trade relations within the Persian Gulf and between this region and Africa and Asia in the period 500 to 1000 CE. This project has moved forward considerably as a results of archaeological excavations that have been on-going at the site of siraf for some 40 years. The objective of this paper is to reassess the archaeological evidence and the contemporaneous textual sources that mention siraf in order to see what they reveal about development and extent of siraf's trade relations.



On the Iranian coast of the Persian Gulf, adjacent to the small contemporary village of Bandar-e Taheri, lie the archaeological ruins of Siraf, an important maritime trading center during the early Abbasid era (750-1258 CE) of history. Surviving textual references and descriptions from the tenth century CE suggest that Siraf may have been the most important port in the Persian Gulf for about a 100-year period, ca. 875 to 977 CE. In that latter year, Siraf was devastated by an earthquake. Although the city was rebuilt, at least partially, political changes in the region favored the emergence of Basra as a major port in that late tenth century, and some of Siraf's trade was diverted there, and, it is likely that some of Siraf's merchant families also migrated to Basra and other ports. Subsequently, the Saljuq invasions of Iran during the eleventh century contributed to a disruption of both maritime and overland trade routes. The combination of natural disaster and political developments, both of which were events over which the people of Siraf had no control, effectively prevented the city from recovering its former prosperity. Siraf continued to decline, and by the time of the Mongol invasions of Iran in the thirteenth century, it was largely abandoned.

The history of Siraf—why it developed, its significance as an entrepot, and the reasons for its decline--is important to reconstruct in order to fill the major gaps in our knowledge

about the economic history of the Persian Gulf. Unfortunately, Persian Gulf economic history, at least in terms of the extent of historical documents, seems to begin in the nineteenth century and is tied to European imperialism in the region. It is a history constructed originally by scholars in Britain, the major external power in the Persian Gulf from approximately 1850 to 1950. It thus is a history that is filtered through the lens of British imperial interests. An outstanding example of this “filtering” are the efforts by indigenous Persian Gulf merchants to contest early British attempts to control trade in the nineteenth century: in historical accounts, the indigenous merchants and crews of their ships are transformed into pirates and British military campaigns to conquer the coastal towns are sanitized as crusades against piracy. Although a few Arab scholars have attempted to write “corrective” histories of this period, the dominant historical view of the early nineteenth century Persian Gulf remains that of a region beset by pirates.

As for the earlier period, the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, historical accounts are scant, even though during the sixteenth century Portugal was trying to control trade in the Persian Gulf. Then there is the problem of twentieth century history, especially in the era after the discovery and export of oil. Despite the importance of petroleum, comprehensive



analyses of the Persian Gulf's economy virtually disappear in favor of a focus on either the Arab or Iranian side of the Persian Gulf and also a tendency to ignore the important cross-gulf trade links that have been dominant features of the region for centuries.

Historical texts in Arabic or Persian for the Persian Gulf prior to 1500 are too few, but the extant sources from the Abbasid period, when relative political stability prevailed here, do attest to the presence of significant trading centers along the Persian Gulf coast, especially on the Iranian side extending from the general area of present-day Bushehr to present-day Bandar-e Abbas. For pre-Abbasid history, documentary sources on the Persian Gulf seem to be virtually non-existent, although it is reasonable to assume that the trading patterns that we can reconstruct for the ninth and tenth centuries must be continuations of trade relations first established earlier. Indeed, both archaeological and numismatic evidence from the Sasanian period (ca. 224-642 CE) indicate that well-established, maritime trade routes existed in the region by 500. Siraf already was a port by this time, although its heyday would be some three or four centuries later. Reconstructing the history of Siraf, from its emergence in the late Sasanian period to its decline and abandonment in the late Abbasid period is an intellectual task

that can contribute to an understanding of trade relations within the Persian Gulf and between this region and Africa and Asia in the period 500 to 1100 CE. This project actually has moved forward considerably as a result of archaeological excavations that have been on-going at the site of Siraf for some 40 years. The objective of this paper is to reassess the archaeological evidence and the contemporaneous textual sources that mention Siraf in order to see what they reveal about the development and extent of Siraf's trade relations.

Siraf under the Sasanians, as well as later, extending right to the twentieth century, was part of Fars (Pars, in Sasanian times). It is not possible to state how important Siraf may have been during the Sasanian period. However, the remains of a Sasanian fort have been discovered under the primarily Abbasid ruins of Siraf. In addition, Sasanian coins and pottery fragments that date to the sixth century also have been unearthed there. According to R. Bocharlat and J. F. Salles, Siraf was connected by road to Firuzabad. Such a road connection would be important to facilitate caravan trade with the hinterland. That is, an established route to the inland centers of Fars would stimulate Siraf's merchants to import goods by sea that could be resold. However, it is also true that, based on extant evidence, historians believe that the primary Sasanian port was Bushire.



Whether Siraf was a secondary port or was of lesser importance can not be established based on evidence currently available. The presence of a fort at Siraf may indicate the site was deemed important enough economically to warrant such protective facility. Or it may indicate that the particular site on the Persian Gulf was deemed a good strategic position for a military installation, and Siraf gradually developed after the fort was constructed.

What is more certain from an historical perspective is that Siraf developed as an important port during the Abbasid period. In the extant sources from the early Abbasid period, the first mention one finds of Siraf is in a manuscript by Ibn al-Faqih from the early ninth century. According to Ibn al-Faqih, merchants in Siraf were sending ships to India, although he does not specify how many ships were owned by Sirafi merchants at this time, and without knowing the size of the mercantile fleet, it is difficult to evaluate the port's importance. One such merchant was Abu Zaid (ca. 877-915), who kept a log of where his ships went to trade goods.

The most comprehensive account of Siraf is that written by Istakhri in about 946. By this time, Siraf seems to have emerged as the primary port in the Persian Gulf and also rivaled Shiraz in

terms of the number of its houses. The city seems to have continued to flourish until the earthquake in 977. That some of its major merchant families choose to emigrate following the earthquake, rather than to remain in Siraf and rebuild the city must have contributed to its decline, although it remained an important trading center for the next 100 years.



Dutch Presence in the Persian Gulf (1623-1766)

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Abstract

The Dutch like the English came to the Persian Gulf to buy raw silk. They had high hopes of profitable results, which initially were indeed realized. However, slowly returns on silk exports fell, which coincided with a Dutch effort to acquire large quantities of silk in the 1630s. Also, they had to borrow too much money locally to finance their purchases in Iran. The Dutch then preferred to reduce their silk purchases and put emphasis on the sale of pepper, spices, sugar, textiles and other products. However, this objective ran counter to the commercial agreement reached with Iran, which stipulated that the Dutch had the right to tax-free trade in Iran on condition that they bought a fixed quantity of royal silk at a determined price that was higher than the market rate. The dispute about the interpretation of the commercial agreement led to the first Dutch-Irano conflict in 1645 and was only resolved in 1651. Despite the conflict trade continued and the Dutch were able to make good profits on the sale of Asian goods, while the export of specie helped finance their business operations in India and Ceylon. Although silk exports had resumed in 1652 the Dutch wanted to reduce their silk purchases, while the Safavid court wanted to increase their sales to the Dutch in the 1670s. Once again a dispute broke out over the interpretation of the agreement, which led to the second Dutch-Irano conflict in 1685, which was only resolved in 1691. Although the conflict was about silk after the resolution of the contract the Safavid court preferred to sell its silk to other merchants and thus the Dutch gradually stopped exporting silk altogether. They still enjoyed their tax-free status and paid the Safavid court an

annual amount in lieu of the silk exports. Apart from specie, the only export commodity of some importance from Iran was Kerman goat wool (kork). Relations between the two sides developed without any major problem until 1714 when a dispute broke out about the alleged illegal export of silver. This dispute was resolved in 1717 by the Ketelaar embassy. With the fall of Isfahan in 1722 trade was dead in Iran and the Dutch only stayed because they hoped that the Safavids would be able to return, also because they owed the Dutch more than Dfl. one million, which they had lent Shah Soltan Hoseyn just prior to the surrender of Isfahan. The restoration of Safavid rule in 1730 was full of promise, but trade soon fell off again and was reduced to 10% of the pre-1722 level under Nader Shah, who ruined his own and other countries with his wars. Because of the low profits, which actually had turned into losses, the Dutch decided to consolidate their operations. They withdrew their office from Isfahan and only kept their trading station at Bandar Abbas. It was only in 1737 at the urging of Afsharid officials that they also started trading in Bushehr in the hope of more profits. This was an empty hope and therefore in 1753 the Dutch decided to withdraw to the island of Khark and left Bushehr. The Bandar Abbas office was closed in 1656, although a caretaker remained. The Khark enterprise was not profitable either and it was decided to close down this office as well. Before this decision could be taken the Dutch were coerced by Karim Khan Zand to join in an operation against Mir Muhanna of Rig, who took Khark and expelled the Dutch. This was the end of Dutch presence in the Persian Gulf, although voyages to Masqat continued to be made until 1794.

Beginning of Dutch Relations with Iran

The Dutch came to Iran to buy its raw silk; for `Abbas I they were a welcome additional source of cash. In the hope to get more cash for his wars `Abbas I had established an export monopoly of silk as of 1619. Like the English, the Dutch therefore started trading with Iran based on contract with the shah. On 17 November 1623, `Abbas I agreed to a treaty that granted the Dutch complete freedom of trade in Iran as well as exemption from customs duties, although road-duties or *rahdari* had to be paid. In exchange for these privileges, the Dutch had to buy silk from the Shah at 48 *tumans* per *carga* (200 kg), which was more than the going market price. The Dutch had to supply 75% of the purchase price of the raw silk with a specified quantity of a number of Asian goods at fixed prices and 25% in cash. The manner of payment was agreed upon in a separate contract with the Shah's factor, Molayem Beg. The implementation of the contract was not easy or to each other's expectation. The Safavid court was not always able to supply silk on time and/or in the required quantity, while the Dutch did not always pay 25% in cash and then oversupplied the royal factor with goods. Also, when the market for Asian goods was down, the royal factor suffered a loss on the sale of his goods.* As a result, difficulties arose between Molayem Beg and the Dutch about

* Dunlop, pp. 677-82; Meilink-Roelofs, pp. 18-19; Hotz 1908, p. 47.

the interpretation of the contractual rights and obligations. Because of these different interpretations of what rights the Shah had granted three times conflicts arose between the two parties concerned during the Safavid era (1645, 1684 and 1712).

The early complaints were resolved by `Abbas I, when the Dutch director, Huybert Visnich, appealed to him for intervention. In 1626, however, Molayem Beg insisted on renegotiating the contract. The result was a new three-year contract for the delivery of raw silk. Half of the silk would be in so-called *ardasse* and half would be *legie* silk.* The contract listed the goods that the royal factor would accept and specified their prices and quantities, all on the condition that one-third of the payment was to be made in cash. The Dutch would provide:

Table 1: list of goods to be supplied to the royal factory by the VOC

Weight	Commodity	Unit cost	Total cost
6,000 <i>mann</i> (12 lbs.)	Pepper	@ 2 ory*	12,000 tumans#
500 <i>mann</i>	Cloves	2 ory	600

* For the meaning of these and other terms denoting the various qualities of Persian silk see Floor, "Dutch Silk", pp. 336-337; see also Ibid., *The Persian Textile Industry in Historical Perspective 1500-1925* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 1999), pp. 14-15.



1,200 <i>soms</i> (312 lbs.)	Sugar	3.5 ory	4, 200
500 bundles	Sarkhei indigo	21 ory	1,050
1,400 to 1,500 <i>mann</i>	Nutmegs	5 ory	730
500 <i>mann</i>	Macis	6 ory	325
55,000 <i>mann</i>	Tin	3.5 ory	1,925
400 <i>mann</i>	Sandalwood	6 ory	200
500 <i>mann</i>	Cochineal	11 ory	5,500
3,000 pieces	Indian steel	2 ory	300
12,000 ells	Cloth (ordinary)	2 ory	2,400
2,000 pieces	Kersey	1 ory	200
.-	Camphor and Benzoin	At market price	570
Total			30,000 tumans

Remarks: *Ory is short for *ducato d'oro* or [the Venetian] gold ducat, which was widely used in trade in the Middle East. The book value of the tuman was Dfl. 40.

Although both the Dutch and Molayem Beg continued to complain about the actual implementation of silk contract both parties, and certainly the Dutch, were quite pleased with their trading results. Silk profits were promising, and later the profits from the pepper sales were also excellent.*

Under Shah Safi I (r. 1629-42) trouble started. Shah Safi had confirmed the treaty with the Dutch trade in 1629, which meant that they continued to enjoy freedom of trade, no restrictions on the volume of trade, total exemption from customs, permission to export specie and the right to transport their goods without examination by royal officials, although road duties had to be paid at the usual rate. In exchange the VOC had to buy silk from the Shah at a rate above the market price, viz. 50 *tumans* per *carga*. In 1632 Shah Safi granted the Dutch also exemption from payment of road duties and other similar imposts. Shah Safi I had abolished the silk export monopoly in 1629, but when silk production in these provinces was severely reduced — first, by a revolt; second, by a lack of labor due to this revolt and a subsequent plague; and third, by the normal agricultural cycle of ups and downs in silk output- was unable to honor his engagement to the Dutch and the English. Moreover, it was more profitable for the shah to export silk to the Levant and he

* Floor 1996, pp. 349-51.

therefore sold most of the royal silk to Armenian merchants for cash. Shah Safi I eventually paid the Dutch and English, but always too late and too little. The Dutch had to satisfy the market, which demanded silk and they therefore bought silk from private sources. However, the contract between the shah and the Dutch Company stated that the latter was free from the payments of customs duties, for the amount equivalent to silk bought from the shah. When Mirza Taqi, the grand vizier, reminded the Dutch that they had to pay customs duties on the private silk Nicolaas Overschie, the Company's director, admitted as much. However, it seems that this was more of a negotiating ploy than an admission. When Mirza Taqi demanded payment of 4,600 tumans in customs duties owed Overschie refused. He did not deny that the Dutch owed customs duties, but the Shah owed the Dutch for the loss of interest on capital, for they had paid and only received silk after lengthy delays and in insufficient quantities. Mirza Taqi was not convinced by this argument and forced the Dutch to pay the amount due.

The director-general of the VOC was furious and ordered his staff in Bandar `Abbas to protest against this non-respect of the treaty and demand repayment of the 'extorted' money. Mirza Taqi, however, told the Dutch that they only enjoyed freedom of trade and from taxes on condition that they bought silk from the Shah.

To show that he meant business he forced the Dutch to buy more silk at higher prices. Also, the Dutch director was treated with disrespect and was even beaten. This position was unacceptable to the Dutch, who wanted to be free of the silk contract. Market conditions had made silk a less attractive export commodity, which the Dutch had now to pay for in cash rather than with Asian goods. At that time the Dutch had a cash-flow problem and therefore had to borrow money in Isfahan at 20% interest per year to pay for silk that they did not want and at prices that they considered too high. When Mirza Taqi refused to give in to Dutch protests, Batavia finally decided in 1644 to go to war against Iran.

In May 1645, a fleet of six ships arrived at Bandar `Abbas. These blockaded Iranian ports, seized some Iranian vessels, and on June 10, 1645 landed troops on Qeshm Island and bombarded the fortress, which they were unable to take. The attack on Qeshm caused consternation in Isfahan and `Abbas II (1642-1666) offered favorable terms to the Dutch. However, before these could be confirmed the commander of the Dutch fleet died in Isfahan before he had even been received by the shah. To facilitate negotiations the Dutch raised the blockade and withdrew their fleet. However, `Abbas II (r. 1642-66) decided to try for better terms by holding up the negotiations. A Dutch negotiating team that came to Isfahan in 1647 failed to break the dead-lock. The



Dutch were allowed, however, to continue to trade customs-free pending negotiations and without having to buy silk. Despite this advantageous situation the Dutch wanted to resolve the conflict, if need be by force, and therefore in 1649 once again a Dutch fleet arrived at Bandar `Abbas. This time no hostilities ensued and both sides agreed to find a peaceful solution. This did not happen immediately as Shah `Abbas II was pre-occupied with the conquest of Qandahar at that time. The conflict was finally settled in 1652 when ambassador Joan Cunaeus obtained new *farmans*, which stipulated that the Dutch would enjoy freedom of trade in Iran and exemption from customs, while their goods could be transported without inspection by the Iranian authorities. Moreover, in future the Dutch would not have to pay road duties. However, the Shah had placed an upper limit on the customs-free import-and export, viz. a value of 20,000 *tumans* per year, and the Dutch were forbidden to export specie. Finally, the Dutch had to buy 300 *cargas* of silk each year from the Shah at a price of 48 *tumans* per *carga* in exchange for these privileges.* This agreement, with minor changes, formed the basis for Dutch trade with Iran till 1766.

The Dutch were not entirely pleased about the result, because they had not obtained all that they wanted from the Shah, but

* Floor 2004.

their standing in Iran and the Persian Gulf nevertheless increased significantly. This was further boosted when the Dutch defeated the English, their major competitor. When this rivalry led to war between the two nations in Europe (the first Anglo-Dutch War 1650-52), this war also spread to the Persian Gulf and the rest of Asia. In 1652 a major naval battle took place near Bandar `Abbas in which the Dutch were victorious. "The repulse of the Portuguese at the beginning was succeeded by collapse against the Dutch at the end. The liberators of Ormus became the scorned at Gombroon." * It meant the collapse of the English trade in the Gulf, although it would make its comeback at the end of the 17th century.

Despite the Governor-General's dissatisfaction with the 1651 treaty it proved to be an effective basis for Dutch trade till the end of Shah `Abbas II's reign. So much so that the Dutch decided to send Huybert de Lairese as envoy in 1666 just to inform `Abbas II how good trade and other relations were. Huybert de Lairese was able to settle a number of minor issues having to do with local officials, while he was probably the last foreigner who was received by Shah `Abbas II, who confirmed Dutch privileges. The Shah died a few days later. This did not mean that there were no problems. In fact there were some serious problems. Between

* Ferrier, *British-Persian*, pp. 97.



1650 and 1666 the function of *shahbandar* of Bandar `Abbas was held mostly by a family member of the powerful grand vizier, Mohammad Beg (1655-61). They took advantage of their position to enrich themselves by levying more than the usual customs duties from merchants. Their oppression grew so much that increasingly Asian merchants avoided Bandar `Abbas and preferred to call on other Persian Gulf ports, in particular Masqat, Bandar-e Kong and Bandar-e Rig, where reception was friendlier and customs rates lower. The result was lower revenues for the Shah, who in 1664 sent one of his courtiers to assess the situation. The latter asked the Dutch for naval assistance to attack Masqat, which had drawn much of the Malabar trade away from Bandar `Abbas. The Dutch played for time, because they were not interested in such an adventure. Moreover, the Shah abandoned the Masqat invasion plan, when the Imam of Masqat raised customs duties to placate Iranian feelings. To prevent competition between Bandar `Abbas, Kong and Rig through lower customs rates the Safavid decided to farm out the customs administration for all its Persian Gulf port as of 1668.*

Under Shah Soleyman (r. 1666-94), new problems arose, however. Trade problems once again became acute in the 1670s; it was in fact a kind of repetition of those of the 1630-40s about

* Floor 1982b ; Ibid. 2005 c.

silk deliveries and interference with Dutch trade. Under Shah `Abbas II the royal court had hardly ever delivered the stipulated 300 *cargas* of silk, which was greatly appreciated by the Dutch. Iranian silk was not a profitable commodity and the Dutch wanted to get as little of it as possible. They had access to an alternative source of cheaper silk in Bengal as of 1650. Moreover, the Dutch were much more interested in exporting precious metals (gold, silver) from Iran than silk. However, in 1670, when the Safavid government faced a serious financial crisis, the dynamic grand vizier, Sheikh `Ali Khan (1669-89), insisted that the Dutch buy the obligatory 300 *cargas* of silk per year. To explore whether they might abandon its operations in Iran the Dutch established a trading station in Masqat in August 1673. They abandoned it in January 1675, because trade in Masqat was disappointing and the Imam did not offer attractive terms of trade. Moreover, the Omani authorities were only interested in possible Dutch military support against the Portuguese.*

The Second Dutch-Iranian Commercial Conflict.

Prior to the outbreak of hostilities in 1685 several incidents had created a negative climate between the two sides. In 1678 a conflict between the governor of Bandar `Abbas and the Dutch about his claim for more gifts and 34 years of arrears of rent for

* Floor, "A Description of Masqat."



the Dutch factory led to an official Dutch protest asking the shah to order the governor to desist, which the shah did. The Dutch had threatened to withdraw from Iran. However, the Dutch were unable to convince Sheykh `Ali Khan to agree to reduce the quantities of silk delivered to them. When in 1680, Safavid officials by force took payment for road-duties Batavia wanted to take military action, but was occupied elsewhere at the time. The governor-general ordered his director in Bandar `Abbas to ask and insist in the delivery of lower silk deliveries. Sheikh `Ali Khan became very angry about this request and said: "You are dealing with a King, not with a merchant, and that if we did not like it we had better leave." At the same time he ordered 300 *cargas* of silk to be delivered to the Dutch factory. The Dutch refused to accept it, which led to an exchange of angry words as a result of which the Dutch representative was beaten and forced to receive the silk. He thereupon lodged a complaint with the grand vizier and asked for a reduction in silk deliveries. The grand vizier replied that "he could not understand what kind of rascally people we were, for he had informed us of his wishes in writing. Further, if we were not interested in sticking to the contract in this manner then we could go to hell and were free to leave the country." The director in Iran recommended that military action be taken, to which Batavia agreed. It sent a fleet (five men-of-war and a hooker) to blockade the Persian Gulf, seize Iranian vessels and/or goods, while a

landing force attacked and seized the island of Qeshm and its fortress, which the Dutch held for one year. Although a Dutch negotiating team had gone to Isfahan, Shah Soleyman refused to negotiate under threat, with Qeshm under Dutch occupation and his ports under an economic blockade. The choice which the grand vizier put to the Dutch was simple: either buy the contractual amount of silk or pay customs duties. He finally allowed the Dutch to return to Bandar `Abbas after they had promised that an ambassador would be sent to settle their differences. Trade was resumed again in 1687 under the supervision of two royal inspectors who recorded all VOC imports and exports.*

To resolve the dead-lock Batavia sent an ambassador, Johan van Leene, who managed to get new privileges after the payment of costly presents and lengthy talks in 1691. Shah Soleyman confirmed Dutch rights to freedom of trade in Iran, exemption from payment of customs duties up to a maximum annual import and export value of 20,000 *tumans* as well as of payment of road duties. Finally Safavid officials were forbidden to open Dutch chests and bales. In exchange the Dutch had to buy each year 300 *cargas* of silk from the Shah at 44 *tumans* per *carga*. Although these *farmans* had not yet been sealed by the Shah the ambassador left, having been promised that they would

* Matthee 1999; Floor 1988 c.



be sent after him. This did not happen. In 1694 the Dutch sent a special mission from Bandar `Abbas to obtain these *farmans*, but then Shah Soleyman died.*

His eldest son and successor, Shah Soltan Hoseyn (r. 1694-1722), however, confirmed the privileges granted by his father and also gave a verdict favorable to the Dutch with regard a dispute concerning the wool trade with Kerman. In 1696, the Safavid court was unable to deliver any silk and therefore proposed to the Dutch that instead of the obligatory delivery of silk they would pay an annual quantity of selected goods to the Shah. The Dutch were not in favor of this change, but to avoid trouble Batavia sent an ambassador, Jacobus Hoogkamer, to Iran in 1701. Hoogkamer (who was VOC director in Iran) was able to conclude a new agreement which stipulated that the Shah would sell the Dutch an annual amount of 100 *cargas* of *kadkhodapasand* silk at a price of 44 *tumans* per *carga*. In addition, the VOC had to deliver to the Shah an annual amount of so-called *recognitie goederen* or treaty goods of the following composition:

10,000 *mann-e Tabriz* or 60,000 lbs powdered sugar

1,120 *mann-e Tabriz* or 6,720 lbs loaf sugar

* van Dam, p. 318-21; Coolhaas, vol. 4, pp. 299-300, 358-63, 582-83, 740-43, 826-27; Valentijn, p. 250-70; Matthee 1999.

119 *mann-e Tabriz* or 864 lbs cardamon
119 *mann-e Tabriz* or 864 lbs cloves
289 *mann-e Tabriz* or 1,704 lbs cinnamon
289 *mann-e Tabriz* or 1,704 lbs pepper
1,000 *methqals* or 111 lbs nutmegs
130 *methqals* or 1.3 lbs mace
650 *methqals* or 6.5 lbs of aguilwood
4 *mann-e Tabriz* or 24 lbs benzoin
24 *mann-e Tabriz* or 144 lbs white sandalwood
2,000 *methqals* or 20 lbs radix china
8 *mann-e Tabriz* or 48 lbs candied nutmegs
4 *mann-e Tabriz* or 24 lbs candied cloves

If the shah did not supply the Dutch with the contracted annual amount of silk they did not have to supply the treaty goods. However, if the Dutch did not purchase any silk, they nevertheless were obliged to deliver the *recognitie goederen*. In exchange the Dutch were granted free trade allover Iran and the import and export of goods exempt from customs and other imposts to the amount of 20,000 *tumans* per year.

Although trade relations developed quite smoothly thereafter, there were nevertheless difficulties that, with hindsight, indicated what trouble lie ahead. Already in 1703, the *shahbandar* of



Bandar `Abbas, Mirza Sadeq, accused the Dutch of having carried on trade worth Dfl. 1,053,653 more than the amount of 20,000 *tumans* or Dfl. 800,000 during the last five years. He therefore demanded the payment of customs over this amount at a rate of ten per cent or Dfl. 135,753. The farmer of the ducat trade in Isfahan also complained about the fact that the Dutch bought too many golden ducats. In June 1710 the farmer of the ducat trade again complained about excessive exports of golden ducats by the Dutch. In response, the Shah issued a decree permitting him to control and examine Dutch caravans. However, after a Dutch protest the decree was revoked and so a source of conflict between the Dutch and Iran was removed.*

The Third Dutch-Iranian Commercial Conflict.

The commercial conflict between Iran and the Dutch started as an in-house conflict in 1712. It was what seemed to be a simple quarrel between Willem Backer Jacobsz, the director at Bandar `Abbas and his deputy, chief of the Isfahan office Pieter Macaré Junior. The quarrel was not about Iranians, but about their private interests in the export of cash. Moreover, the fact that Macaré had become deranged played a major role. Already in 1710 Macaré had written to the VOC directors that Backer Jacobsz has organized a plot against his life. Macaré therefore

* Floor 1988 chapter 1.

tried to arrange that Backer Jacobz be dismissed and he himself appointed as director in Iran. In his turn Backer Jacobsz complained about Macaré, but Batavia asked for proof. In 1711 Backer Jacobsz asked to be allowed to resign; Batavia decided to appoint Macaré in his place and hoped that this would but an end to the troubles. However, by that time Macaré had become totally deranged. He now accused his interpreter of wanting to poison him, and therefore van Biesum, his deputy, took over management of the Isfahan office declaring Macaré mad and incompetent. Macaré reacted by asking the grand vizier to reinstate him! To induce the grand-vizier to get involved Macaré informed him about Dutch export of specie on which the required export duty had not been paid. The grand vizier then demanded to examine the Dutch trade books, which van Biesum refused. The grand vizier threatened to demand a large amount in compensation from the Dutch and the Dutch threatened to leave Iran. Macaré, who still held the VOC's money-box, had given the grand-vizier a large loan with the promise of royal protection. To resolve the conflict the grand vizier sent an envoy (Mohammad Ja'far Beg) to Batavia in 1714. He also took Macaré with him, who, despite the promise of Iranian protection, was handed over to Dutch authorities to stand trial. The envoy returned in 1715 with the promise that an ambassador would be sent to discuss the matter. Meanwhile, the



new grand vizier, who did not want to wait for the ambassador to arrive, extorted 6,000 tumans from the Dutch, after which they were left in peace.

Johan Josua Ketelaar, the Dutch ambassador, arrived in Isfahan on May 31, 1717. After several meetings on July 31 the grand vizier offered that he was prepared to grant the Dutch the same privileges that Hoogkamer had obtained in 1701 on the following conditions:

- i. Free export of ducats was not allowed because this had not been granted in the *farmans* which Hoogkamer had obtained.
- ii. All Dutch caravans would have to be examined and their bales sealed before departure, as in former times.
- iii. The Dutch had to cancel the Shah's debt owed to them.
- iv. The treaty goods would have to be twice the amount henceforth, and
- v. Iran would cancel the Shah's claims of 68,392 *tumans* on the Dutch.

Under pressure Ketelaar accepted this offer, but he received the new decrees only after having paid 1,000 *tumans* to the grand vizier. A few days later the grand vizier invited Ketelaar for talks about the Omanis, who had just attacked Bahrain for the

third time in row and now had taken it. He asked for Dutch military support to retake the island. Ketelaar replied that he had no authority to do so, that the VOC was not interested in military ventures, but that he would inform the Governor-General of the request. Ketelaar was willing to give passage to an Iranian envoy to Goa to ask the Portuguese for military support. When Ketelaar arrived at Bandar `Abbas, the Omanis also had taken the islands of Qeshm and Larek and were besieging the fortress of Hormuz. The governor of Bandar `Abbas asked the Dutch for military support, which was refused. He then surrounded the Dutch factory to enforce their compliance. During the blockade Ketelaar, who had been ill since his arrival in Iran, died. The siege was then raised. Batavia was not pleased with the results of Ketelaar's mission and instructed director Jan Oets try to get better terms, which only led to interpretation difficulties between the two parties. Discussions dragged on, which led to no resolution and were ended by the fall of the Safavid dynasty in 1722.*

The Afghan Occupation of Iran.

The Ghilzai Afghans of Qandahar had first thrown off Safavid rule in 1704, but after re-imposition of Safavid control were able to expel Safavid troops in 1715. In 1719 they had devastated

* Floor 1988 c.



much of Eastern Iran, and in 1721 they returned to march on Isfahan. After a five months' siege the city was taken and Safavid rule was handed to Mahmud Khan, the Ghilzai chief. The Dutch staff in Isfahan were kept under house arrest till the Afghans fled in December 1729. Afghan forces only reached Bandar `Abbas at the end of 1727, which led to strained relations with the Dutch. The latter were therefore considering moving their base of operations to Hormuz, whose garrison had invited them to do so. The whole issue became irrelevant when the Afghans abandoned Bandar `Abbas on January 9, 1730. The only Dutch trade during the Afghan period took place in Basra, where the VOC had returned in 1724, for by then it had become clear that the economic situation in Iran would not improve soon. Trade was non-existent and the Dutch had to make money, at least to make enough to cover the cost of its expensive establishment in the Persian Gulf.*

Afsharid Iran.

The Afghan occupation changed the nature of Dutch operations in Iran. First, the Dutch had to keep a permanent military garrison at Bandar `Abbas to protect their staff and trading operations as of 1721. Second, the formal basis of Dutch trade relations with Iran still rested on the premise of tax-free trade in

* Floor 1998.

exchange for the purchase of silk and the annual supply of the treaty goods to the court. However, after 1730 the court did not supply any silk and thus the Dutch bought none, while they also did not sent the treaty goods to the court. The Dutch thus formally enjoyed advantages for which they did not return any benefit to the shah, who therefore felt entitled, without saying so, to demand services from the Dutch. Already in 1730 Tahmaspqli Khan (the later Nader Shah) asked the Dutch to patrol the littoral to prevent Afghan leaders from fleeing. In 1733, he asked them to stop Mohamad Baluch Khan and Sheikh Ahmad Madani, leaders of a revolt against him, from fleeing. The demand to ferry Iranian ambassadors and their goods gratis to Thatta also became a regular item. The demand for these services became really obnoxious and expensive when Nader Shah (r. 1736-1747) started his invasion of Oman in 1737. His generals regularly demanded that the Dutch ferry across supplies for the troops and supply equipment to the newly formed fleet. Despite protests the Dutch gave in fearing militarily retaliation. They refused, however, to sell any ships to Nader Shah, although they temporarily made some craftsmen available for his shipyard at Bushire. In 1741, the Dutch reluctantly supplied two ships to assist in a punitive expedition against Arab mutineers, who had taken half of Nader Shah's fleet. Demands to ferry supplies to Oman continued to be made and given, but



these demands finally stopped when Mirza Taqi Khan rebelled in 1745. During the fights between the rebels and forces loyal to Nader Shah in Bandar `Abbas the Dutch refused to choose sides and told both parties that they were there to trade not to fight. They would only do so if forced to defend themselves.*

The End of Dutch Presence in the Gulf.

The death of Nader Shah in 1747 brought temporary relief to the littoral and trade. However, the succession war that had broken out in Iran also reached the Persian Gulf. In 1751, forces of `Ali Mardan Khan Bakhtiyari took Bandar `Abbas. The Dutch had left the port prior to their arrival leaving a skeleton staff behind to look after their affairs. Although, the full staff returned in 1752 they did not stay long. In 1758 the Dutch closed their factory in Bandar `Abbas, although they left a caretaker to look after the building. It was taken over by the governor of Lar in 1765.*

Already in the 1740s proposals had been made to abandon the entire trade with Iran, because of losses suffered. The Dutch had established a factory in Bushire in 1734 to increase sales, but the results were disappointing. Not only was trade not important,

* Floor 2005 a; Ibid, 1987.

* Floor 1989a.

there also was interference with trade by the local chief sheikh Madhkur, while sales at Bushire had a negative impact on those of the Dutch factory in Basra. This office had become independent of the Persian Directorate in 1747. When in 1751, Tido von Kniphausen, the Dutch chief in Basra, was accused of having relations with a Moslem woman and was forced to pay a large sum to obtain his freedom he was able to convince the governor-general in Batavia of the advantage of a reform plan for Dutch trade in the Persian Gulf. Von Kniphausen suggested to close down the factories in Basra and Bushire, and eventually also in Bandar `Abbas, and to build a factory on the island of Khark. Being on an island would guarantee that the Dutch were not subject any more to demands from local officials for assistance and supplies. Von Kniphausen returned to the Persian Gulf in 1753 with three ships. He blockaded the Shatt al-Arab and forced the Basrene authorities to return the money extorted from him. He further closed the factory of Bushire much to the chagrin of Sheikh Naser of Bushire and built a new one on Khark Island. Because most Dutch trade was gradually concentrated at Khark this rendered the Bandar `Abbas factory irrelevant, which was therefore closed in 1758. Von Kniphausen tried to stimulate trade and revenues, by, for example, getting engaged in pearling, while he also proposed to occupy Bahrain, which proposal Batavia vetoed. After an initial rise in trade



results they soon fell back to their previous low lackluster level. Von Kniphausen's successor had to deal with the piratical activities of Mir Muhanna, the chief of Bandar-e Rig. The latter also contested the Dutch claim that his father had given Khark to them and attacked the island in 1762, but he was repulsed. By that time Batavia had received orders to close down Khark and withdraw from the Gulf, but because of Batavia sugar interests in sales in the Persian Gulf this decision was postponed. When the decision was finally taken it was too late, because in late December 1765 Mir Muhanna had attacked Khark again. The Dutch against their better judgment had reluctantly agreed to support a military operation against Mir Muhanna by the new ruler of Iran, Karim Khan Zand. Mir Muhanna of Rig not only preyed on his neighbors on land, but also was engaged in piracy at sea. Karim Khan Zand and the chiefs of the neighboring ports, therefore, wanted to mount a combined land and sea operation against Mir Muhanna. Karim Khan's forces had expelled Mir Muhanna from Rig, who then had fled to the small island of Kharqu, next to Khark. The Dutch were supposed to assist Bushire forces led by Sheikh Sa'dun, who fled when Mir Muhanna attacked them. Dutch forces that had landed on Kharqu were no match for Mir Muhanna. They suffered considerable losses and withdrew to Khark. Mir Muhanna then immediately attacked the Dutch factory, which surrendered on

January 3, 1766. Although he kept the goods that he found there as booty Mir Muhanna allowed the Dutch staff to depart and even gave them a few small boats to reach Bushire.* Thus ended 133 years of permanent Dutch presence in the Persian Gulf. It did not mean that the Dutch did not come to the Persian Gulf anymore. Until 1793, each year one ship or sometimes two, usually privately-owned, sailed from Batavia directly to Masqat to sell its cargo, mostly consisting in sugar and some spices. Although letters were received from local governors (Hormuz, Bandar `Abbas, Bushire, and Basra) inviting the Dutch to come and trade again at those ports the VOC had decided that trading in the Persian Gulf was too risky and not profitable enough. It could sell the goods it would sell there in the market of Surat, whence they would be taken by country-traders into the Gulf.*

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* Floor 1992, 1994.

* Floor 1979a; idem 1982a; idem 1982b; idem 1992; Perry.



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The Persian Gulf and Siraf in works by Muslim Cartographers*

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Abstract

The object of this paper is to demonstrate that the Persian Gulf or the Persian Sea, as it was occasionally called, was a well established waterway known practically to all geographers and historians of the Muslim as well as the classical world. Siraf was an all important port also identified in early manuscripts and maps of the Persian Gulf. Although early Muslim cartographers did not have the proper skills for presenting an accurate portrayal of the Persian Gulf and its adjacent towns, yet Siraf appears in most maps of Muslim geographers well after its devastation in the late 10th century CE.

Although the migration of the Arabs to the southern shores of the Persian Gulf began from the second century of the Christian calendar, Iranian domination in the southern regions of the Persian Gulf achieved a more profound status during the Sasanian dynasty (ca. 224-642 CE). The political rivalries of the two main powers, the Romans and the Persians in the northern end of the Persian Gulf, extended the Iranian borders deep into the Mesopotamian hinterlands. In this region, the Sasanians established their governments by creating Hira (al-Hira) or Monazereh in the northern and central regions of

present day Iraq. This was intended to serve as a protective political wall against the Roman pressure. As a geo-strategic response to the Persian forces, the Romans created the frontier government of Ghassan in the region corresponding to the present day Syria in order to neutralize Persia.

In the Strait of Hormuz, "Mazundum" or "Masundum" means the place of entry into "Masun." Currently this name is referred to as Musnadam and is the place of entry into Masun, Oman from within Iran. Oman also existed in the form of Omana and the present day port of Suhar was the name frequently used in the past with reference to the region. Arab migrations from the Arabian Peninsula and from Yemen towards the coastal areas of the Persian Gulf were common, as was the migration from within Iran towards the southern coasts. It was on this basis that Arab geographers of the Islamic period like other geographers named the sea that separated Iran from the mass lands of the Arabian Peninsula as the "Sea of Pars" or the "Persian Gulf."¹

Early historians and geographers of the Arab and Islamic world such as Tabari, Masudi and Yaqubi claimed that the entire Persian Gulf belonged to the ancient Iranian world. Abul Qassem Muhammad bin Hawqal al-Bagdari known as Ibn Hawqal in his invaluable work entitled *Surat al-Ardh*, completed



in 977. CE/367 A.H, refers to the Persian Gulf in the following words:

As stated numerous times, the Pars Sea is a gulf which separates from an ocean adjacent to the world) near China and the land of "Waq" and it is that sea which extends from the lands of Sind, Kerman and Pars and from all of the lands it is known as Pars. There is no sea that compares to this and which is more advanced than the Sea of Pars. The reason is that the kings of Pars from ancient times have exerted immense control over the territory and even now they continue to exert the most control on distant and near lands to this Sea.²

Like the pre-Islamic period, the mass land of the southern shores of the Persian Gulf was divided into two sections: Oman (Mason-e Peshin) and Bahrain (Hagar-e Peshin). Both names of the Sea of Fars and the Persian Gulf were common in the historical and geographical works of the Islamic period. The Arab and Muslim geographers like their predecessors, the pre-Islamic Iranians sometimes called the sea between the Iranian plateau and the Arabian Peninsula as the sea of Fars and occasionally, imitating the ancient Greeks they referred to it as the Persian Gulf.

On the other hand, the theory held by the ancient Iranian geographers that the world was divided by two seas is discussed in detail in the works of Islamic geographers. Among early Muslim geographers, the argument that a dual sea divided the internal waters of the world was discussed in depth and these two seas were presented as the Sea of Pars and the Roman Sea (i.e. the Mediterranean).

Suhrah, a Muslim writer of the 3rd/9th century in his *Ajayeb al-Aqalim al-Sab'at ela Nahayat al-'Amarat* presented the south (eastern) waters of the world as the "Sea of Fars, and as *al-Bahr al-Junubi al-Kabir* (the southern great sea)." In other words, the Sea of Fars corresponded to the same huge southern (eastern) sea frequently mentioned. During this period, other Muslim and Arab geographers, called the sea in the south as the Persian Gulf. For instance Abu Ali Ahmad bin Umar bin Rasteh in his *Kitab al-'Alaq al-Nafiseh* (290 A.H.) mentioned "a branch of the Indian sea in the direction of Fars called the Persian Gulf."

The term "Persian Gulf" is frequently employed in most of the geographical works of the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th centuries of Islam, corresponding to the 9th to 12th centuries CE. In these writings the theory of a dual structure of the inland waters of the earth continued to prevail. The large eastern sea was still called the



Sea of Fars. In Istakhari's *al-Masalik va al-Mamalek* it is stated that "the largest sea is the sea of Pars and the Roman sea... both originate from the adjacent seas near the edge of the world and the length and width of the Sea of Fars is more significant, and beyond the end of this sea lies the land of China."³ In Ibn Hawqal's *Surat al-Ardh* the sea of Fars is assumed to include all the seas which circle the Islamic lands.⁴

Abu Reyhan Biruni is perhaps the first geographer of the Islamic world who in his *al-Ta'fhim* and the *Qanun al-Masudi* dismissed the theory of the extent of the sea of Fars and limited the sea of Fars to the sea of Oman and the Persian Gulf. In his *al-Ta'fhim*, Abu Reyhan frequently made use of both the sea of Fars and the Persian Gulf. Biruni's geographical definition of the Persian Gulf served as an accepted definition for several centuries hence.

In the 4th century of Islam (10th century) Persians were able to annex the southern regions of the Persian Gulf to their own territories. Ahmad Mu'izz-ud-Dawla Dylami (945 CE/334 A.H.) began to conquer the Mesopotamian region and the southern territories of the Persian Gulf. His nephew, 'Azad-ud-Dawla Dylami (978 CE/367 A.H.) was able to exert Iran's sovereignty over the entire southern region of the Persian Gulf.

From this period the migration of Iranians to the southern regions of the Persian Gulf was revitalized once again.

During this period coastal regions and the islands on the northern end of the Persian Gulf acquired distinct fame and reputation, locations such as Siraf or Shirab (near present port of Taheri), Abarkafan or Laft (present day Qishm), Abrun (modern Hindurabi), Abu Shahr (modern Bushehr), Miyanrudan or Abadan (modern Abadan), Janabeh (modern Ganaveh), Durdur (near present Abadan), Duraq or Duraqestan (present Shadegan), Mahrezeh (near Abadan), and Hormuz (modern Bandar Abbas). Ship building and sailing by Iranians in the southern waters of the Persian Gulf was again revitalized significantly. In this regard, Ibn Hawqal in his *Surat al-Ardh* is noted to have said that: "Ships from different regions that safely manage to traverse the oceans and return home with pomp and immunity are those belonging to Pars."⁵

Iranian sovereignty over the southern regions of the Pars Sea encountered difficulties throughout the Islamic centuries and local groups emerged in different parts of Iran and each managed to impose its sovereignty for a brief period of time. It was at the peak of the Safavid power (1502-1723 CE/907-1135 A.H.) that Shah Abbas managed to expel the Portuguese from



Bahrain and the Persian Gulf in 1603 CE/1011 A.H., and was able to return the entire southern coastal areas of the Persian Gulf under Iranian control. This situation prevailed until the death of Nadir Shah in the summer of 1747 CE/1160 A.H.

Though Iranian authority and control over the southern regions of the Persian Gulf prior to the Islamic period was clear and well defined, during the Islamic dominance, particularly between the 11th to 14th centuries of the Islamic calendar (16th to 20th centuries CE) this authority was vague and uncertain. While autonomous tribes of the southern littoral of the Persian Gulf continued to maintain their political affiliations with Oman or Muscat, the governments of Oman and Muscat would enter into bilateral agreements with the Qajar government and would rent sections of the northern littoral coast of the Persian Gulf from Iran and would use the Iranian territories to launch an occasional attack against Bahrain and other settlers on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf. This tenuous relationship between Iran and Oman often prepared the way for autonomous tribes of the region as well as the British to take advantage of the area and to pursue their own interests in a region that often seemed to resemble a no man's territory.

Collective immigration of Iranians to the southern regions of the Persian Gulf in the Islamic centuries continued. Groups settling in that region managed to adapt themselves to the environment and gradually transformed into nomadic tribes who spoke in native Arabic. Among these Arabic speaking tribes were the Bani Khamareh, Al-e Bumahar, Al-e Ali and Bani Havaleh.

From the 13th CE/7th A.H. century onward, geographical descriptions of the earth tended to correspond somewhat accurately with the real world. Also, at about approximately the same time we notice an increase in the use of the Persian Gulf in the prevailing geographical works

The expression Bahr-e Fars (Persian Sea) was also employed in the various sources until the 20th century and occasionally both names were used simultaneously. For instance Mustafa bin Abdullah the famous Katib Chelebi of Constantinople who was often referred to as Hajji Kalifeh (died 1657 CE/1067 A.H.) mentions in his Turkish work entitled *Jahanuma* that "The Persian Sea is called Sinus Persicus which means the Persian Gulf because of the location of Pars on its eastern end. It is also called Mare Persicum, or the Pars Sea."⁶ The manuscripts of the first version of Katib Chelebi's *Jahanuma* have in the margins finely sketched maps. In 1732 CE/1145 A.H. version of the



same work, full-paged maps, obviously in the style of contemporary European cartography are provided, but with inverse orientation, that is north is provided at the bottom of the manuscript.

As the geographical limits for the name of Bahr-e Pars narrowed itself in the works of geographers after 13th CE/ 7th A.H. century, the geographical name of the Indian Sea acquired a broader use until gradually the Persian sea came to be regarded as an extension of the Indian sea. The Italian Muslim geographer, Sharif al-Edrisi who belonged to Sicily in his *Nuzhat al-Moshtagh* (1165 CE/560 A.H.) mentions the Indian and the Chinese seas as the "green Chinese sea," and regards the Persian sea as an extension of the sea of China. In the description of geographical locations he faithfully follows Ibn Rasteh. Apparently, Ibn Rasteh in *al-'Alaq al-Nafiseh* (903 CE /290 A.H.) mentions that "from the sea of Hind, a gulf separates itself towards the lands of Fars which is called the Persian Gulf."⁷

Half a century after Sharif al-Edrisi, Yaqut Hamavi Rumi who was also from Italian decent, in his *Mu'jam al-Buldan* mentions the sea of Fars. From 14th/8th century until the present day, the southern sea of Iran in both Arabic and Islamic sources has been

identified as the "Sea of Fars" or the "Persian Gulf." Zakariya Qazvini (d.1284 CE/682 A.H.) in his work entitled *Asar al-Bilad va Akhbar al-Abad* mentions the Sea of Fars.⁸ However, in a map provided in the same text the sea to the south of Iran is referred to as the "Persian Gulf."

Shams al-Din al-Dameshqi (d. 1327/727) also mentions the Sea of Pars as well as the Persian Gulf in his *Nukhbat al-Dahr fi 'Ajayeb al-Bar va al-Bahr*.⁹ Also, Ibn al-Wardi (d. 1349 CE/749 A.H.) in his *Kharidat al-'Ajayeb va Faridat al-Qarayeb* repeatedly mentions the Bahr al-Fars or the Sea of Fars.

In his Persian work entitled *Nuzhat al-Qulub* Hamdullah Mustufi (d. 1340 A.D. /740 A.H.) also makes references to the Persian sea while Ahmad Ibn-i Abdullah al-Ghalghashandi (d. 1418 CE/821 A.H.) in his study entitled *Subhi al-Asha'* has used the term Bahr Fars. Likewise, the Arabic dictionary of *al-Bastani* published in Beirut (1883 CE) made frequent use of the term Persian Gulf.

A few geographical works belonging to the Islamic period have occasionally employed uncommon names such as "Bahr al-Ajam," "Hormuz Sea," "Basra Gulf," etc. However, these were used only in rare and unusual circumstances.



The period of Muslim cartography can be approximately dated between 8th to 15th CE/3rd to 10th centuries A.H. The earliest available maps belonging to this period are translations of Ptolemy's Atlas into Arabic. During this period numerous maps have been preserved from Muslim mathematicians, geographers and cartographers. Early mention of "Bahr al-Fars" appear in works by Kindi (801-873 CE/185-260 A.H), Khurdadba (826-913 CE/211-300 A.H), and Masudi (897-964 CE/284-353 A.H). However, none is more attractive and distinct than the map of the Persian Gulf prepared by Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Nasr "Jayhani" about 922 CE/310 A.H. who presents the ports and islands of the Persian Gulf including Siraf, Hormuz, Abadan, Bahrain etc. with particular clarity. What make the map more attractive are the sketches of Adam, the Island of Sarandib and Kan Yaquf, fishes and whales. Jayhani, like other geographers of his time, regarded the Indian, Chinese and the Red seas as an enclosed waterway and a mere extension of the Persian Gulf.

Abu Ishaq Ibrahim al-Farsi known as Istakhari (ca. prior to 930-957 CE/318-346 A.H.) in his remarkable manuscripts entitled *Surat al-Eqlim* and *al-Masalik va al-Mamalik* has also provided us with various maps of the Persian Gulf. These maps are

available to us through different translations of Istakhari into Persian, Arabic and Turkish. Istakhari quotes Abu Zayd Balkhi in his *Masalik va al-Mamalik* as follows:

The Sea of Pars is a gulf from the ocean (i.e. outer world) extending to China, Sumatra and India. They call it Pars and Kerman for there is no place as cultivated as these on this sea and in the past the kings of Pars were greater and stronger while today it is from the shores of Pars that the people are dispersed elsewhere.¹⁰

The historian and geographer of the 4th century A.H., Ibn Hawqal, in his *Surat al-Ardh* wrote:

I have repeatedly said that the Sea of Pars is a gulf from the ocean (i.e. outer world) from China and near Sumatra and this sea extends from Sind and Kerman to Fars and among other countries it is known as Fars since Fars is the most developed of these countries and the kings of these territories in the past had significant authority and presently they exert their hold over all the shores, both near and far. Ships that traverse the sea of Fars, move far away from their own lands and then return with pride and in complete safety, all belong to Fars.¹¹



Following Ibn Hawqal, the limits of the Persian Gulf gradually changed in the works of cartographers and geographers and sections of that became known as the Indian sea and the Red Sea (Arab Sea) both as separate seas, and gradually a more precise limit of the Persian Gulf became apparent, so much so that in 966 CE/355 A.H. for the first time in the dictionary *al-Badeh va al-Tarikh* of Tahir al-Maqddisi which was written for one of the viziers of the Samanians (819-1005 CE/ 204-395 A.H.), we encounter the name of al-Khalej al-Farsi.

Shams al-Din Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Abu Bakr al-Maqddisi (946-1000 CE/335-390 A.H.) in his world maps that include Iraq, mentions the Sea of Fars. Copies of these maps are available in the Aya Sophia and the Berlin Libraries. In addition, maps of the world belonging to Abu al-Hasan Ali bin Yunes al-Sadafi known as Ibn Yunes (950-1009 CE/339-400 A.H.) were discovered and recreated by the Polish scholar Jochaim Lelewel in 1850 CE/1267 A.H and were published in book form entitled *Geography of the Medieval Ages*. Abu Reyhan Muhammad ibn Ahmad Biruni (973-1048 CE/362-440 A.H.) known as Abu Reyhan Biruni, includes the maps of the "seven seas" and the Sea of Fars in his *al-Ta'fhim*.

Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ahamd bin Yusef al-Katib Kharazmi (ca. 975-991 CE/365-381 A.H.) presented the Sea of Fars in a complete map of the Persian Gulf and in his world atlas. His maps, in manuscript form, are to be found in Istanbul, in the Koshak (Kosk) Library of Sultan Ahmad.

Abu al-Ishaq bin Yahya al-Naqash ibn al-Zarqaleh known as "Zarqali" (1029-1087 CE/420-480 A.H.) has made references to the Sea of Fars. Also al-Sheikh Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Edrisi al-Hussaini al-Tallebi known as "Edrisi" (1000-1600 CE/493-555 A.H.) in maps collected and published by Konrad Miller and known as "the world map of Edrisi, mentioned the Sea of Fars and identified the major islands and cities such as Khark, Bahrain, Hormuz, Seraf, 'Abadan, etc.

In another manuscript belonging to the Herogliche Bibliothek, under the name of Abu Ali al-Farsi al-Nahvi (ca. 1172 CE/569 A.H.) a complete and an independent map of the Persian Gulf is to be found (no. 1521) under the title "Surat al-Bahr al-Fars". Among other information, this map includes the names of islands, ports and cities of the Persian Gulf.



Suwar al-Aqalim provides us with another manuscript belonging to Muhammad ibn Muhammad bin al-Hussain al-Tusi, better known as Khajeh Nasir al-Din Tusi. This is presently available in the National Library of Vienna. The manuscript clearly illustrates the Sea of Pars with its various islands and ports.

Abu Abdullah Zakari Muhammad bin Mahmud al-Qazvini (1203-1283 CE/600-682 A.H.) in *al-Aqalim* and *Asar al-Balad va Akhbar al-'Ebad* has repeatedly mentioned the name of the Persian Gulf. Manuscripts of his work are to be found in the Leiden University Library, the British Museum and the Hurzogliche Bibliothek in Gotha. Also, Wustenfeld and Miller have reconstructed and published the Qazvini maps in a presentable form.

A manuscript of the Persian Gulf by Abul Hasan Ali Qarmati al-Maghribi known as Ibn Sa'id (1214-1286 CE /610-685 A.H.) is available at the Bibliotheque National (registration no. 2214) in Paris. Belonging to the 12th and 13th centuries, maps of the Persian Gulf are also available from Yaqut Hamavi (1179-1229 CE/576-626 A.H.) and Mathew Paris (ca. 1195-1259 CE/592-657 A.H.), while both Gervase of Tilbury (ca. 555-608 CE/A.D.1160-1211) in the world map of Ebstorf and Gullaume

of Tubruquis (1220-1293 CE/617-692 A.H.) illustrate the Persian Gulf in a larger map of the world.

Ismail bin Ali bin Muhammad bin Umar bin Shahanshah bin Ayub 'Imaddudin, known as Abu al-Fada' (1273-1331 CE/672-732 A.H.) and Hamdullah Mustufi (1281-1349 CE/680-750 A.H.) in maps presented in *Nuzhat al-Qulub* introduced the Sea of Far. Numerous manuscripts of the latter are available at the Oxford Library and the British Museum. Konrad Miller, in his collection of Arabic maps published in Stuttgart in 1931 presents several samples of Mustufi's maps as part of his collection.

In different maps of the world, Saraj al-Din Abu Hifz Umr ibn al-Vardi (1313-1371 CE/713-773 A.H.) mentioned the Sea of Fars and "khalej al-Farsi" copies of which are now available in Berlin, Paris and the Bodlean at Oxford. Also Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 CE/732-808 A.H.) made frequent use of the Sea of Fars along with an Egyptian astrologer and geographer (ca. 1332 CE/832 A.H.) Ahmad bin Hamadan bin "Shabib Harrani," who presented the Sea of Fars in the sketch of his world map. A manuscript of his work is to be found at the Herzliche Bibliothek in Gotha, registered as no. 1513.



From the works of Shahab al-Din Abdullah Lutfullah Khavafi, the Iranian historian and geographer of the Timurid period known as "Hafez Abru" (d. 1430 CE/ 833 A.H.) have numerous maps of the world in his *al-Masalik al-Mamalik*. A copy of this map is available at the British Museum in London (no. 16736). However, no independent map of the Persian Gulf is at our disposal. In his work Krachkovskii, the Russian cartographer, mentioned two maps of the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf by Hafez Abru. Non-Muslim and western geographers such as Richard of Haldingham (1285 CE/684 A.H.), Petrus Vesconte (ca. 1320 CE/720 A.H.) and Randulf Higden (1299-1363 CE/699-765 A.H.) both in their continental and world maps mention the Persian Gulf. These maps are to be readily found in the National Libraries in Berlin, Paris and London.

With the advent of the Renaissance in the early 16th century, the science of cartography improved significantly. However, by then Siraf had practically disappeared from all maps of the Persian Gulf. This goes to show that since the big earthquake that devastated practically the entire Port of Siraf and its vicinity in the late 10th century CE, it was no longer able to elevate itself to its previous position of distinction.

References and Notes

* This article is partially based on a forthcoming joint study by Shahab, Kamali, Vatandoust, et. al., entitled *Persian Gulf: In Old and Historical Maps*.

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An Archaeological Overview

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Abstract

Between the third/ninth and fifth/eleventh centuries, Siraf was a leading participant in the network of maritime trade, which brought merchandise from Africa, India and the Far East to the markets of Western Asia. During this period, geographical writers described the fine houses of Siraf, the goods that passed through its bazaar and the extraordinary voyages of its ships.

Attracted by the possibility of increasing our Knowledge of the city and its activities, the British Institute of Persian Studies, with the support of the Iranian authorities, conducted seven seasons of excavations at Siraf between 1386/1966 and 1392/1973. These excavations revealed the city's largest mosque, a palace, a residential area, the bazaar and the potters' quarter. Other components of the city included a large building on the shore a monumental cemetery, both of which present problems of interpretation.

This overview provides an introduction to the archaeology of Siraf.



Domestic Architecture

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Abstract

Istakhri, writing about 340/951, described in glowing terms the houses of the wealthiest residents of Siraf: "[The houses] are of teak and other wood from Africa and have several stories [Some] residents ... spend 30,000 dinars on building a house and surrounding it with gardens."

During the excavations of 1386/1966- 1392/1973, we investigated several of the residences that impressed Istakhri. These included a palace, part of a residential area and other domestic buildings. In almost every case, the building had more than one period of construction and we concluded that building plots were redeveloped at fairly frequent intervals.

All permanent buildings at Siraf were constructed of stone and mortar. The houses had square or rectangular plans. On the ground floor, one or two entrances gave access to a courtyard, which was surrounded by rooms. Although nothing remained in situ, we found evidence of houses with two or three stories, as Istakhri described.

The lecture describes the archaeological evidence for the character of domestic architecture at Siraf and its development over more than 200 years.



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